THE REVELATION

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
3 0109 00087 5172

BS
491
E6
N.T.
v.12

Bible. N.T. 149569
Revelation...
The revelation of St.John the divine.

DATE DUE

MAR 2 6 1976
NOV 3 1980
MAR 2 1981
MAY 10 1982
NOV 7 1983
JUN 17 1997
MAY 31 2002

Subject To Recall After 2 Weeks

LIBRARY
NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

3454188

WITHDRAWN
NDSU

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-DZJ-236

THE NEW TESTAMENT
COMMENTARY

Bible. N.T. Revelation. English. 1903.

THE REVELATION OF
St. John the Divine

WITH COMMENTARY BY
W. BOYD CARPENTER, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF RIPON

EDITED BY
CHARLES JOHN ELLICOTT, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LIMITED
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO AND MELBOURNE
MCMX

N.D.S.U. LIBRARY
FARGO, N.D.

149569

A-10501

First Edition, 1877.
Revised Edition *February* 1883.
Reprinted July 1883, 1885, 1888, 1891, 1896, 1903, 1910.

BS
491
E6
N.T
v.12

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE REVELATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

I. The Author.
II. The Date and Time of Writing.
III. Schools and Principles of Interpretation.
IV. General Scope of the Book.
V. Literature.

I. **The Author.**—The general opinion of the Church of Christ has accepted the Apocalypse as the work of John the Apostle, but this general opinion has been called in question. Our space can only allow us to lay before our readers a brief *resumé* of the reasons which have been urged on either side. For convenience it will be as well to ask the following questions:—

(1) *Was the Writer's name John?*—At first sight it would seem that there could be but one answer to this question. The book announces itself as written by a person whose name was John. Four times over does the name occur (Rev. i. 1, 4, 9, xxii. 8).

Is there any reason for questioning the witness thus given by the book itself? It has been asserted that the writer does not claim to be John, but only "gives a report of a revelation which John had received" (Scholten). It is perfectly true that a writer might thus dramatically represent the Apostle John as the seer of the revelation; but such possibility is no proof that it was so, and certainly cannot be entertained in the total absence of all proof. The reiteration of the name four times is out of harmony with this conjecture; and the theory would not, as Gebhardt has remarked, be applied to any other book of the New Testament. Would any serious reply be "thought necessary should it occur to some one to reject the First Epistle to the Corinthians, because from such passages as 1 Cor. i. 13, it does not follow that the author identifies himself with Paul, but gives (i Cor. i. 1, 2), after the manner of an introduction, a report of an Epistle which the Apostle wrote?"

We may assume, then, that the writer's name was John.

(2) *Was the Writer John the Apostle?*—It is round this question that we meet the most serious conflict.

(*a*) It is admitted on all hands, even by those who oppose the apostolic authorship of the book, that the great consensus of early opinion regarded the writer as St. John the Apostle. "From the time of Justin Martyr to that of Irenæus and the great Fathers, the Apocalypse was recognised as a production of the Apostle." Such is the opinion of Keim (*Jesu v. Nazara*). "We find the Revelation unhesitatingly attributed to him (St. John) by the Fathers from the middle of the second century downwards; by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others" (Bleek). The opinion of the third century was the same. Origen, whose opposition to millenarianism adds value to his testimony, Cyprian, Lactantius, and others, acknowledge the Apocalypse as the work of St. John.

Setting aside the opinion of Marcion, and of the unimportant sect of the Alogi (see *Introduction to the First Epistle to St. John*), doubts respecting the apostolic authorship seem to have commenced with Dionysius of Alexandria; these doubts which were echoed hesitatingly by Eusebius, were based not on historical or critical, so much as upon doctrinal grounds: the dread of millenarianism created a wish to discredit the book which appeared to lend such weight to the disliked doctrine. It is needless to follow the history of this controversy; it is enough to notice that the first breach of this continuous early opinion in favour of the apostolic authorship grew out of doctrinal prejudice rather than candid examination.

(*b*) In later years, the controversy has been fought from different bases of operation. The conflict respecting the authorship of the Fourth Gospel (see *Introduction to St. John's Gospel*) has complicated the dispute. It seemed to some impossible to believe that the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse proceeded from the same pen. The divergence in style and language was, in their view, too great to admit of their being written by the same man, even though that man were an Apostle. If the Gospel was the work of St. John, the Apocalypse could not be. The generally accepted opinion that St. John wrote the Apocalypse was assailed by those who, in their wish to preserve their faith in the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, were ready to sacrifice the Book of Revelation. This was substantially the view adopted by Neander, Lücke, Ewald, Bleek, Düsterdieck, and others. In opposition to these, others were ready to adopt the other hypothesis: they accepted the view that the two books could not have been the work of one and the same writer; but they preferred to sacrifice the Gospel: the Apocalypse was the work of St. John; the Gospel, therefore, could not be. Such was the view of those who, like Baur, aimed at discrediting the Fourth Gospel, or who wished to support the theory of a designed antagonism between the school of St. John, and that of St. Paul. Neither of these parties — those who would sacrifice the Apocalypse to the Gospel, and those who would sacrifice the Gospel to the Apocalypse — represent the most recent phase of the controversy. Another class of thinkers

arose who felt that the witness which the Fourth Gospel and the Revelation alike gave to the Person of Christ was too strong to be allowed the authority of an Apostle by those who had formed other and lower conceptions of the Jesus of the Gospels. They saw no glimpses of His heavenly glory and majesty in the synoptical Gospels. They found that the Book of Revelation was full of them. The Christ of the Apocalypse was the Word of God, the King of Kings; the Christ of the Gospels was One who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. The portrait given in the Gospels of "the loving and amiable Son of Man," as the Divine Son of God was patronisingly styled, was not to be found in the Apocalypse; such a book could not have been written by one who personally knew the gentle and self-sacrificing Prophet of Galilee—least of all, perhaps, by the beloved disciple. Such is the view of the more recent critics, and advanced with varying power and arguments by Volkmar, Hoekstra, and Scholten. The book was a forgery, or at best the composition of some other John—not of John the Apostle. Besides, it was urged, the Apostle could not have been the author, for it is clear that the writer lived in Asia Minor, whereas the Apostle John never was in Asia Minor at all.

Such is, perhaps, the most recent phase of the controversy.

(*c*) We have not space to do more than touch but briefly, and only upon a few of the arguments advanced against the apostolic authorship of the book. It will, perhaps, be best to specify three or four.

(i.) St. John the Apostle, it is said, never resided in Asia Minor; he could not, therefore, have been the author of a book which is undoubtedly the work of one resident there.

It is proverbially difficult to prove a negative: it is increasingly difficult when only negative evidence can be adduced, and this is all that can be appealed to. The argument, if argument it can be called, runs thus: the residence of St. John in Asia Minor is not mentioned by those whom we might have expected to mention it: therefore, St. John did not reside there. To use the words of a modern critic (Mr. Matthew Arnold), "But there is the rigorous and vigorous theory of Prof. Scholten, that John never was at Ephesus at all. If he had been, Papias and Hegesippus must have mentioned it: if they had mentioned it, Irenæus and Eusebius must have quoted them to that effect. As if the very notoriety of John's residence at Ephesus would not have disproved Irenæus and Eusebius from advancing formal testimony to it, and made them refer to it just in the way they do. Here, again, we may be sure that no one judging evidence in a plain fashion would ever have arrived at Dr. Scholten's conclusion; above all, no one of Dr. Scholten's great learning and ability" (*Contemporary Review*, vol. xxv., p. 988).

To this also we may add Gebhardt's words:—"No one in the second century could believe that the Apostle John was the author of the Apocalypse, without at the same time believing that he lived in Asia Minor; and in like manner, the acknowledgment of the Apocalypse as the Apostle's from the time of Justin Martyr downwards, made prominent by Keim, is an acknow-

ledgment of his residence in Asia Minor, and inferentially at Ephesus."

(ii.) There are, it is stated, traces of non-apostolic authorship in the book.

(α) The manner in which the Apostles are spoken of (see chaps. xviii. 20 and xxi. 14) is thought to be inconsistent with the opinion that the Apostle wrote it. The Apostles are mentioned with a degree of objectivity, and are assigned a prominence which is unlikely if an Apostle were the writer. But with regard to the last, if St. John describes the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem as bearing the names of the twelve Apostles, St. Paul speaks of the Church being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets (Eph. ii. 20). The imagery is distinctly apostolic; and if the Apostles are mentioned with "objectivity" in the Apocalypse, are they not mentioned with an equal, if not greater, degree of objectivity by St. Matthew? (Matt. x. 2—4.)

(β) But, it is argued, there is no hint given throughout the book that the writer is an Apostle. If St. John were the writer, would he not betray himself somewhere as the beloved disciple? Should we not have some allusion to his intimacy with his Master, or to some circumstance connected with the life and ministry of Christ? In reply, it is enough to remark that the nature of the book would not lead us to expect such allusions. He writes as a Prophet, not as an Apostle. It would be as idle to expect some allusion to the circumstances of Milton's political life in the *Paradise Lost*. "The Apocalypse declares itself not to be the work of an Apostle in the same sense as Schiller's poetry declares itself not to be the work of a professor at Jena" (Gebhardt).

But it may be further urged that there are not wanting certain characteristic allusions which reveal the writer. The allusions to the piercing of the Saviour's side (chap. i. 7; comp. John xix. 34), and to the washing, or cleansing (chaps. i. 5; vii. 13, 14; xxii. 14—see Note there—John xiii. 8—10), are not to be overlooked; and more than these may be detected by a careful student.

(γ) There is no trace of Apostolic *authority*.

If we are not to expect personal reminiscences, we surely should expect the air of official authority. But the answer is, Do we not find this? The language is surely that of one who does not doubt that his name will carry a guarantee with the book. (Comp. Prof. Davidson's article in Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopædia*.)

(iii.) The Christology of the book is described as non-apostolic. The picture which the Apocalypse gives of Jesus Christ is not that of the Gospels. In the Gospels we have the loving and gentle Son of Man; in the Apocalypse we have the Word of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and whose mouth a sharp sword, &c. Is not the whole conception of the kingly Christ thus portrayed the product of a later age? "The picture of Christ which here comes before us seems to presuppose a conception so perfectly free, that it can only belong to a later Christianity" (Scholten). "The apotheosis of Christ is too strong to be ascribed to a contemporary and disciple of Jesus" (quoted in Gebhardt).

Such objections as these arise

from a fundamental misconception of the character and work of Jesus Christ. The Christ of the Gospels is not the colourless creation which has been evolved out of the thought of men living eighteen centuries afterwards. The Christology of the Apocalypse is distinct enough, but it does not differ from the Christology of St. Paul; and it is in complete harmony with the lofty and divine utterances of our Lord Himself even in the synoptical Gospels. Time and space would fail us in illustrating this position; it will suffice to refer to two or three passages, which might be multiplied: Matt. xxv. 31; xxvi. 13; Luke v. 20; vii. 8, 9, 23, 35; ix. 41; x. 16—20.

(iv.) The divergence in style between the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel demands a few words. We have spoken of those critics, who, in their desire to preserve the authority of the Gospel, have been willing to throw overboard the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse. Is it necessary to do this? It has been shown that the external evidence is in favour of the apostolic authorship. In the language of Prof. Davidson, "With the limited stock of early ecclesiastical literature that survives the wreck of time we should despair of proving the authenticity of any New Testament book by the help of early witnesses, if that of the Apocalypse be rejected as insufficiently attested." Is there any reason in the internal character of the book sufficient to reverse this verdict? Or, in other words, assuming (and the stormy controversy has rather increased than diminished the right to the assumption—see *Introduction to St. John's Gospel*) the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, is there any ground for believing that the Apocalypse could not have proceeded from the same writer? There are no doubt strongly marked differences. We have not space to touch on the whole question. One or two points call for notice. There are differences of language; there are "anomalies," "awkward dispositions of words," "peculiar constructions;" "the Greek is moulded by the Hebrew tendencies of the writer." This is no doubt largely the case; but there has been often a want of appreciativeness at the root of some criticisms like these: some violations of grammatical construction have been set down to ignorance on the part of the writer, when it is clear that they were intentional Notably, the language of Rev. i. 4 is beyond all doubt designedly ungrammatical; indeed, as Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out, were it not so, the writer would not have possessed sufficient literary power to construct a single sentence. Nor has sufficient weight been allowed to the different characters of the two books, or the interval of time which elapsed between their writing. The highly wrought rapture of the seer, when beholding the visions of the Apocalypse indicates a mental state in which volitional control is at the minimum, and the automatic action of the mind is left free. At such a time the images and associations which have been originally imbedded in the memory are those which rise uppermost to clothe the thoughts. Thus the strong Hebrew colouring is precisely what we should expect from one who, of ardent temperament, has spent the whole of his earlier life in Palestine, and among

those who were constantly talking over Messianic hopes and prophecies. (Comp. John i. 38—41.) The force of this is not invalidated by saying that the seer did not write the visions as he saw them, but recorded them afterwards. In the first place, it is merely an assumption to affirm this; in the next, even were it true, the man who records such visions must recall the whole mental condition in which he was at the time of the vision, and would preserve in his record the characteristics of such a state of mind. Nor can much stress be laid upon the fact that the writer was not young. The visions of God are given to the old as well as to the young. The loftiest revealings were given to Moses when he had passed fourscore years: and, even from a merely human point of view, it is possible for a man of sixty to retain the fire and warm imagination of youth. Even in modern life, when the faculties are too often drudged into imbecility by forced and premature development, and deprived of their full and ultimate power by being made reproductive when they ought to be remaining receptive, we may find the powers of imagination survive the strain and incessancy of toil; indeed, in some cases the imaginative powers have gathered force till the line of the threescore years has been passed. Edmund Burke was sixty when he wrote his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and none will condemn him for deficiency in imagination. It was not in the ardour of youth that Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy*. The conditions of ancient and Eastern life were probably much more favourable to the preservation and quiet ripening of the powers of thought and imagination. The truth is that there is nothing so deceptive as the comparison between the ages and powers of different writers; there is no standard which can be used as a measure. Some men of sixty are, in mental force, more nearly allied to men of forty than to those of their own age; and the addition of twenty or five-and-twenty years brings them to the mellow and quiet autumn-time of their life.

The Apocalypse may be "sensuous," full of "creative fancy," "objective," and "concrete;" the Gospel may be "calm," "mystic," "spiritual," and delighting in "speculative depth"; but differences equally great may be found in the works of other writers. Literature supplies numberless instances of such varieties. "It is strange," wrote Lord Macaulay, "It is strange that the *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, and the *Letter to a Noble Lord* should be the productions of one man;" yet no one has been found to doubt that they were both written by Edmund Burke. The writings of De Quincey supply examples. Let any one compare the *Autobiographic Sketches*, or *The Confessions of an Opium Eater*, with one of the little flights of fancy—such as the *Daughter of Lebanon*—written under different conditions, and he will find how much diversity may be found in the works of the same writer. And, not to go beyond the Gospels, might it not be said that there is a great separation in tone and thought between our Lord's discourses in Matt. xxiii.—xxv. and the Sermon on the Mount? We have, then, in the two books—the Gospel and the Apocalypse—different subject-matter, vision instead

of history; a wide interval of time —some twenty or twenty-five years; and, with this interval of time, a changed atmosphere of associations and influences, Greek instead of Hebrew: these in themselves would account for divergences greater even than we find.

If we can thus account for the differences we meet with, we have to remember that there are resemblances in the two books which can scarcely be accidental, and which, found in two independent books, would have suggested to some shrewd critic the theory of a common authorship. There is a strong resemblance in language and imagery: both books delight in the words "witness" (*martyr*), "to overcome," "to keep" (the word of God), "sign" (*sémeion*), "dwell," or *tabernacle* (in this last case the coincidence is lost sight of in the English version, because the word "dwell" is used instead of *tabernacle*, or "tent"), "true" (*alethinos*), (John i. 9; xix. 35; Rev. iii. 14; xix. 9).

There is a similarity in the terms used to describe our Lord. He is the *Word* (John i. 1—3; Rev. xix. 13); the *Lamb* (John i. 29; Rev. v. 6); the *Shepherd* (John x. throughout; Rev. vii. 17); the *Bridegroom* (John iii. 29; Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 2); similar images are used—the *Living Water* (John iv. 10; vii. 38; and Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 6; xxii. 17); the *Hidden Food*, bread, or manna (John vi. 32—58; Rev. ii. 17); the *Harvest* (John iv. 34, 38; Rev. xiv. 15). The same incident—the piercing of our Lord's side—is referred to; and the word employed, both in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse, is singularly not the word used in the LXX. version of the prophet Zechariah. There, is besides, a similar disposition towards a seven-fold arrangement of subjects in the Gospel and the Revelation. (See *Introduction to St. John's Gospel.*)

Further resemblances might be pointed out. These, however, will suffice to show that Prof. Davidson, in his candid, impartial, and valuable article (see above), says no more than truth when he writes: "After every reasonable deduction, enough remains to prove that the correspondences between the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel are not accidental. They either betray one author, or show that the writer of the one was acquainted with the other. These cognate phenomena have not been allowed their full force by Lücke, Ewald, De Wette, and Düsterdieck."

To conclude. The author represents himself as John in a way, and at a time, that would naturally suggest that he was either John the Apostle and Evangelist, or wished to pass as such. The general consensus of early opinion believed that the Apostle was the writer. The doubts grew out of doctrinal prejudice; there is no reasonable ground for disputing the residence of the Apostle in Asia Minor. There are not wanting traces of personal reminiscences such as the beloved disciple would have cherished. The portrait of Jesus Christ is in complete harmony with apostolic teaching; and the difficulties which beset the theory that there were two Johns —one who wrote the Gospel, and the other the Apocalypse — are greater than those which surround the theory of a common authorship.

It is only necessary to add the attesting language of various and independent critics. "The apostolic

origin of the Apocalypse is as well attested as that of any other book in the New Testament" (Davidson). "The testimony has been pronounced more absolutely convincing than can be adduced in favour of the apostolic authorship of any of the books of the New Testament" (*Edinburgh Review*, October, 1874).

II. The Date and Time of Writing.—The evidence for determining the date of the Apocalypse is in many respects conflicting. Any conclusion on the matter should be given with caution and hesitation, and with the full admission that the arguments which can be brought on the other side are entitled to consideration. It has been too much the practice among the supporters of different theories to insist with unwise positiveness upon their own view. Briefly, there are practically only two opinions, between which the reader must decide. The book was either written about the year A.D. 68 or 69, or about a quarter of a century later (A.D. 96), in the reign of Domitian.

The later date was that which was accepted almost uniformly by the older theologians. In favour of this early tradition has been appealed to. The most important witness (in some respects) is Irenæus, who says that "the Apocalypse was seen not long ago, but almost in our own age, towards the end of the reign of Domitian." Other writers have been claimed as giving a support to this view by their mention of Patmos as the place of St. John's banishment; and it is plain from the way in which Eusebius quotes the mention of the Patmos exile by Clement of Alexandria, that he associated it with the reign of Domitian. On the other hand, it must be remembered that neither Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, or Jerome, state that the banishment took place in the reign of Domitian. Tertullian, indeed, represents Domitian as *recalling* the exiles; and other writers affirm that the banishment took place much earlier. Theophylact, for example, declares that the Apostle was in Patmos thirty-two years after the Ascension; and the preface to the Syriac version of the Apocalypse affirms that the revelation was given to St. John in Patmos, whither he was banished by the Emperor Nero. Another tradition assigns the writing to the reign of Trajan. Epiphanius, in a passage of doubtful value, places the exile in the reign of Claudius.

On the whole, then, there is not any very certain conclusion to be drawn from the external evidence. The exile in Patmos receives ample support, but the date of the exile is hardly settled by early tradition.

Will the internal evidence help?

The advocates of the later date rely much upon the degenerate state of the Asiatic churches, as described in the Epistles to the Seven Churches. The Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written during the captivity of St. Paul at Rome, about the year A.D. 63. If, then, the Apocalypse was written in A.D. 69 or 70, we have only an interval of six or seven years to account for a striking change in the spiritual condition of the Asiatic churches. Can we believe that a Church which is so forward in love as that of Ephesus (Eph. iii. 18) can have in so short a time left its first love?

Can it be believed that the Laodicean Church — whose spiritual condition in A.D. 63 can be inferred from that of Colossæ (Col. i. 3, 4) —can have, in six brief years, forsaken their "faith in Christ Jesus, and their love to all the saints," and become the "lukewarm" Church (Rev. iii. 15, 16) of the Apocalypse?

It may be noticed, in passing, that the above argument assumes that the (so-called) Epistle to the Ephesians was really addressed to the Church at Ephesus; and this is by no means certain: the weight of evidence appears to incline the other way. But allowing this to pass, and, for the purpose of argument, assuming that the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians afford indications of the spiritual condition of these and kindred Asiatic churches, it does not seem to the writer that the above argument can be sustained. The two propositions on which its force depends are the following: —

(1) It is impossible that churches could change much for the worse in six years.

(2) A comparison between the Apocalypse and the Letters of St. Paul show a great change for the worse.

From these two propositions it is inferred that the interval must have been more than six years: a generation at least being required to account for such degeneracy. "It bespeaks a change of persons, the arrival of a new generation" (Hengstenberg).

It is believed that neither of the two propositions mentioned above can be sustained. (1) It needs no long time for the first ardour of young converts' zeal to cool. The New Testament gives us examples of such rapid changes: the "evil eye" of a perverted teaching bewitched the Galatians (Gal. iii. 1), so that the Apostle marvelled that the disciples were so rapidly turning away to another gospel (Gal. i. 6). Changes quick and real soon sweep over a religious community, especially in districts where the natural temperament is warm, impressible, and vivacious. It is not impossible that six years may make changes in the religious condition of churches.

But (2) it is more important to consider the second proposition, and to ask whether it is so certain that any such great change had taken place in the instances before us. A comparison of the Epistle to the Colossians and that to Laodicea rather leads to an opposite conclusion. Professor (now Bishop) Lightfoot has shown that the same truths need enforcing (comp. Col. i. 15—18, and Rev. iii. 14), the same practical duties are taught (Col. iii. 1, and Rev. iii. 21), the same lukewarmness is the subject of caution (Col. iv. 17, and Rev. iii. 19), the same denunciations are heard against the pride of life, in wealth or intellect (Col. ii. 8, 18, 23, and Rev. iii. 17, 18). "The message communicated by St. John to Laodicea prolongs the note which was struck by St. Paul in the Letters to Colossæ. An interval of a very few years has not materially altered the character of these churches. Obviously the same temper prevails, the same errors are rife, the same correction must be applied" (Bishop Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Colossians*, pp 41—44).

A similar comparison might be

made between the two Ephesian Epistles. The impression left from a perusal of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, whether addressed to that Church or not, is that he was not without a fear that the warm love which prevailed among the Christians addressed might soon change: it is a love above the accidents of time and the powers of change which he desires may be theirs (Eph. vi. 24; Rev. ii. 4). The area of comparison between this Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistles to the Seven Churches becomes much wider when we regard it, in harmony with probability, as a circular letter addressed to the Asiatic churches: then the resemblances become more plain, and the so-called great change in spiritual condition disappears. It will be sufficient to mention the following: Eph. i. 18, Rev. iii. 18; Eph. ii. 6, Rev. iii. 21; Eph. iii. 8, Rev. ii. 9; Eph. iii. 17—19, Rev. ii. 4.

Enough has been said to show that the argument from the spiritual condition of the churches lends little or no support to the later date, but fairly strengthens the earlier.

The advocates of the earlier date adduce other internal evidence. They lay great weight upon inferences drawn from chaps. xi., xiii., and xvii. They argue that the measuring of the Temple and the treading down of the Holy City, described in chap. xi. 1, 2, is a token that Jerusalem had not yet fallen. This argument does not seem to the present writer satisfactory. The measuring of the Temple is symbolical, and it is unsafe to ground an argument upon it. The aim of the vision seems to us to point out the safety of the germ-Church during the times of desolation. The external framework, the old Jewish polity, might be swept away (chap. xi. 2; comp. Heb. viii. 13): the true spiritual germ would never die, but spring forth in fuller and freer vigour. Such a vision might indeed have preceded the fall of Jerusalem; but it might also have been given as a consolation and an instruction afterwards.

Hardly more convincing is the argument from chaps. xiii. and xvii. In the account of the seven-headed wild beast we read of seven kings, five of whom are fallen. The seven kings are said to be the emperors of Rome. The five fallen are Augustus, Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, Nero; the one that is, is Galba. The force of this depends upon the truth of the interpretation. If the seer meant the seven kings to represent seven emperors of Rome, then the date of the Apocalypse is fixed to the age of Galba; or to that of Nero if we begin to reckon with Julius Cæsar. The former is the most correct method of reckoning. To make the sixth head Vespasian, as some would do, is, as Dr. Davidson has remarked, quite arbitrary. There is no reason for omitting Galba, Otho, and Vitellius from the reckoning. But the force of the argument for the date here depends upon the truth of the interpretation; and the foundation passages in the prophecy of Daniel, from which the Apocalyptic seer drew so much of his imagery, describe under the emblem of the wild beasts, kingdoms, or world-powers, rather than individual monarchs. Still, of course, it is possible that there may be a double interpretation—one more local, the other more general—here as well as elsewhere.

But the requisite interpretation does not seem to be sufficiently clear for the purpose of argument.

Nor can the argument from silence be accepted. There is no allusion to the fall of Jerusalem in the book; but it is scarcely safe to infer that the book was therefore earlier than that catastrophe.

One other internal (so called) argument respecting date may be noticed here. Lücke cites chap. xviii. 20, where the Apostles and prophets are invited to rejoice because they have been avenged on Babylon, to prove that St. John the Apostle was dead when the book was written. This is one of those prosaic errors into which even the most learned and trustworthy of literary experts are betrayed by their own acuteness.

There yet remains another class of evidence: that of language and style. Assuming the common authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse (see *Introduction* to the Gospel, and section on the Author above), we shall have very little doubt that the general probability is in favour of the Apocalypse having been written first. Not only is the Gospel marked by the sententiousness of age, and the Apocalypse by the warm colouring of earlier life, but the influence of Jewish Associations is more strongly marked in the latter; while Greek influences are more distinctly traceable in the former.

The evidence on this head inclines to the earlier date, but it is not absolutely conclusive: the prevalence of Hebraic influences noticeable in the Apocalypse might well fit in with the later date. The influences of youth often re-assert themselves with startling vigour in declining years: the provincialisms and accent of boyhood have been resumed by men in the evening of life, after having been kept long in abeyance by the joint powers of control and culture. Illustrations of this will occur to the reader. But, in the instance before us, the probability seems to lie the other way: in the Apostle's case the Hebraic influences did prevail during the early life; the Greek influences were present during his later life; and we may well believe that the Apocalypse "marks the Hebraic period of St. John's life which was spent in the East, and among Aramaic-speaking populations"; and that the Gospel was written twenty or thirty years afterwards, at the "close of the Hellenic period during which St. John lived in Ephesus, the great centre of Greek civilisation." (See Bishop Lightfoot's Article on "Supernatural Religion," *Contemporary Review*, vol. xxv., p. 859.)

To conclude this brief summary, we may say that the general weight of evidence is in favour of the earlier date, and certainly this supposition fits in best with all the circumstances of the case.

III. Schools and Principles of Interpretation.—Before entering upon the general meaning of the book, it is desirable to lay before the reader a brief account of the different schools of Apocalyptic interpretation.

(1) *Schools of Interpretation.*—It is well known that there are three main systems of interpretation: these are called, from their special tendencies of thought, the Prætorist, the Futurist, and the Historical.

The Prætorist in general maintains that the visions of the

Apocalypse relate to events and circumstances which are past: the prophecies of the book—at least in their primary intention—have been fulfilled. Among the advocates of this view may be reckoned the names of Grotius and Hammond, the learned and eloquent Bossuet, Eichhorn, Ewald, De Wette, Lücke, Düsterdieck, Professor Moses Stuart of America, and in this country the late lamented Professor Maurice, Prof. Davidson, and Mr. Desprez.

The Futurist is at the opposite pole of interpretation, and maintains that the fulfilment of the book is still future, when our Lord will come again. Professor Davidson has separated the Futurists into two classes—the simple Futurist and the extreme Futurist: the difference between these classes being that the simple Futurist believes that the prophecies of the book are future in fulfilment, while the extreme Futurist holds that even the first three chapters are prophetic. Among those who have maintained the more moderate Futurist view may be mentioned De Burgh, Maitland, Benjamin Newton, Todd, and the devout Isaac Williams. The extreme Futurist view has been supported chiefly by some Irish expositors.

The Historical school holds a sort of middle place between the Præterist and Futurist. Its advocates believe that in the Apocalypse we have a continuous prophecy, exhibiting to us the main features of the world's history: the visions therefore are partly fulfilled, partly they are in course of fulfilment, and a portion still remains unfulfilled. This view has been sustained by men of conspicuous ability. It was the interpretation which commended itself to many of the Reformers, and was favoured by Wiclif, Bullinger, Bale, and others. It was upheld with more systematic power by such distinguished writers as Mede, Vitringa, Daubuz, Sir Isaac Newton, Whiston, Bengel, and Bishop Newton: more recently it has been advocated by Hengstenberg, Ebrard, Auberlen, by Elliott and Faber, by Bishop Wordsworth and the late Dean Alford, by Barnes, Lord, and Glasgow.

It is, of course, to be understood that there are many varieties of interpretation even among those who belong to the same school of interpreters: but it would quite exceed the limits at our disposal to speak of these varieties.

Against these schools of interpretations it is not difficult to find objections. It is hard to believe, with the Præterist, that the counselling voice of prophecy should have spoken only of immediate dangers, and left the Church for fifteen centuries unwarned; or, with the Futurist, to believe that eighteen centuries of the eventful history of the Church are passed over in silence, and that the whole weight of inspired warning was reserved for the few closing years of the dispensation. Nor, on the other hand, can we be thoroughly satisfied with the Historical school, however ably and learnedly represented. There is a certain nakedness about the interpretations often advocated by this school: the interpreter is too readily caught by external resemblances, and pays too little heed to inner spiritual and ethical principles. A mistake into which this system falls is that of bringing into prominence the idea of *time*. According to them, the visions of the book are pictures of occurrences

to take place at a certain fixed date. Now it must never be forgotten that the question of *time*—the time when this or that was to happen—was one which our Lord steadily put on one side. It was not for His disciples to know the times and the seasons. The knowledge of the time of an event is insignificant compared with the knowledge of the forces, elements, and laws which combine to produce it. This seems to be our Master's teaching to His followers all through time. Our study is to know what are the foes we have to contend against, what combinations they are likely to make, in what power they are to be confronted, what difficulties are likely to arise, what certainty there is that all difficulties will be surmounted and every foe overthrown. It matters not for us to know when these things shall be: it may be at the first watch, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing: the time is a matter of no ethical importance. It is thus St. Peter treats it: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It is but the echo of his Lord's warning. It may take a long time or a short time for the moral laws and moral forces at work in the world to bring forth a crisis period. To take St. Peter's words as laying down a kind of prophetical "time-measure" is to fall into that fatal source of error, the conversion of poetry into prose. We are not, then, to look for any indications of *time* in the visions of the Apocalypse; and what might have made this very plain is the employment of proportional numbers to denote the prophetic epochs in the book. These carefully-selected numbers, always bearing a relationship to one another, and so selected that a literal interpretation of them is almost precluded, are beyond doubt symbolical, and thus in harmony with the whole character of the book. "Most numbers in the Revelation should not be taken arithmetically, but indefinitely, because they are part of the poetic costume borrowed from the Old Testament" (Davidson). The anxiety respecting the "times and seasons" has led many interpreters into voluminous errors, and has created a Thessalonian restlessness of spirit in many quarters. Infinitely more important is it to notice the moral and spiritual aspects of the book, the evil and the good principles which are described in conflict, and the features which in different ages the combat will assume.

But, though the time-interpretation of the book is thus to be placed in the background, it must not be so done as to imply that the book has no reference to occurrences which will happen in time. If some of the Historical school of interpreters have so forced the question of time into prominence as to ignore the more important ethical bearings of the book, it is no less true that critics on the other side have erred in removing the application of the book wholly out of the sphere of history, and giving it only the force of a fairy tale with a possible and doubtful moral. This is to set aside the value of the book to the Church of Christ as she moves across the vexed and stormy sea of this world's history. The visions of the book do find counterparts in the occurrences of human history: they have had these, and they yet will have these, fulfilments; and these fulfilments belong neither

wholly to the past, nor wholly to the future: the prophecies of God are written in a language which can be read by more than one generation: what was read here helped the early Christian to whom imperial Rome was the great Babylon which absorbed to herself the wealth, and the wickedness, the power and persecuting spirit of the world, to whom the emperor may have seemed as a wild beast, savage and relentless, rising out of the tumults of peoples and nations, fickle and ruthless as the sea. No less have the visions of this book consoled the mediæval saint or poet, who felt that the most influential seat of the Church had become the metropolis of worldliness when "The Prince of the New Pharisees" was seated in St. Peter's chair, and when out of a professedly Christianised Society had arisen a power aspiring to some religious culture, but fierce, wild, and wanton as the wild beast of ancient days. (Comp. Dante, *Inf.* xxvii. 85; and Rosetti's *Antipapal Spirit of the Italian Poets*—passim.) Nor is the force of the consolation exhausted; in the future, the visions of this book, showing the certain triumph of all that is good and true, in the final consummation of Christ's kingdom, may hereafter serve to console men and women groaning under a tyranny of ungodliness more terrible and more specious than any which have preceded it, because built up of a pride which worships physical laws, while it treads under foot all moral laws, and spurns contemptuously all spiritual laws. In the past, the book has had its meaning: in the future, its meaning may grow fuller and clearer; but in the present also there is no doubt that it has its practical value for all who will reverently and patiently hear and keep the sayings of this book.

We are disposed to view the Apocalypse as the pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict, though under various forms. The Præterist may, then, be right in finding early fulfilments, and the Futurist in expecting undeveloped ones, and the Historical interpreter is unquestionably right in looking for them along the whole line of history; for the words of God mean more than one man, or one school of thought, can compass. There are depths of truth unexplored which sleep beneath the simplest sentences. Just as we are wont to say that history repeats itself, so the predictions of the Bible are not exhausted in one or even in many fulfilments. Each prophecy is a single key which unlocks many doors, and the grand and stately drama of the Apocalypse has been played perchance out in one age to be repeated in the next. Its majestic and mysterious teachings indicate the features of a struggle which, be the stage the human soul, with its fluctuations of doubt and fear, of hope and love—or the progress of kingdoms—or the destinies of the world is the same struggle in all.

(2) *The Principles of Interpretation.*—It will have been seen that the writer does not feel at home under the leadership of any of the three great schools of prophetical interpretation. The Church of Christ owes much to all of them, though the cause of truth has suffered much from many who have sought to be prophets when at the most they could aspire to be inter-

preters; but the result even of the errors of interpreters has been the slow formation of sounder views, and therefore an advance towards a clearer, because a more modest, system. There are certain principles which seem to be now very generally accepted as essential to the right understanding of the book. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the acceptance of these principles will enable the student to unlock every mystery, or expound every symbol; but it will certainly save him from following "wandering fires." Of these principles the chief seem to be the following:—(1) the root passages in the Old Testament prophecies must be considered; (2) the historical surroundings of the writer are to be remembered; (3) the fact that the book is symbolical must never be forgotten; (4) the obvious aim of the book to be a witness to the triumph and coming (*parousia*) of Jesus Christ must be recognised. These principles are simple enough, but their neglect has been only too fatally evident. The difficulty, indeed, lies rather in the application of these principles than in their acceptance. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the Præterist school has been apt to ignore the first of these principles; the Historical school has not adequately recognised the second; and the Futurist school is in constant danger of forgetting the third; while partial views in all schools have violated or weakened the value of the last principle.

The "coming of Christ," viewed from the human side, is a phrase which is not always to be held to one meaning: it is, in this respect, analogous to the "kingdom of God." "Holy Scripture, beyond all doubt, recognises potential and spiritual, as well as personal, 'comings' of the Lord." * "There are many comings of Christ. Christ came in the flesh as a mediatorial Presence. Christ came at the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ came, a spiritual Presence, when the Holy Ghost was given. Christ comes now in every signal manifestation of redeeming power. Any great reformation of morals and religion is a coming of Christ. A great revolution, like a thunderstorm, violently sweeping away evil to make way for the good, is a coming of Christ" (Robertson, *Sermons*, Fourth Series, p. 73). It is thus that the sacred writers speak as of Christ's coming always at hand: "The judge standeth at

* The whole note from Bishop Waldegrave's *Bampton Lectures* is worth quoting. "Holy Scripture, beyond all doubt, recognises (1) potential and spiritual, as well as personal, 'comings' of the Lord, See, for potential 'comings,' Matt. x. 23; John xxi. 22, 23; Rev. ii. 5, 15, 16, 22—25; iii. 3, 10. . . . See, for spiritual 'comings,' Ps. ci. 2; John xiv. 18, 21—24; Rev. iii. 20. In like manner Holy Scripture recognises (2) a potential and spiritual, as distinct from a personal, 'presence' of Christ with His people. See Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20; Mark xvi. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 17. Now such potential and spiritual comings and presence will naturally, when translated, if I may so speak, into the language of imagery, assume the outward appearance of a personal and visible coming and presence. And this fact will abundantly account for the use of language (expressive of potential and spiritual comings) like that in Ps. cii. 13—16; Isa. xix. 1, 16, 19—21; xl. 10; lix. 20; Zech. ii. 10—12: (expressive of potential and spiritual presence) like that in Ps. cxxxv. 21; Isa. xii. 6; xxiv. 23; lx. 13; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24; xli. 22; xliii. 1—9; xliv. 1, 2; Joel ii. 27; iii. 17, 20, 21; Micah iv. 7; Zeph. iii. 14, 15; Zech. vi. 12, 13; viii. 3, without expecting a personal reign of Christ upon earth as its only adequate counterpart."

the door;" "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." So, also, our Lord speaks: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Thus, viewed from one aspect, the "coming of Christ" has various applications; but viewed from another aspect, it will be seen to be a phrase expressive of a simple thought, and free from all perplexing ambiguity. The coming of Christ, viewed from the divine side, is as a single act, in which all subordinate applications are included. There is no past or future with God. All that is being done, is, in one sense, done. God's dealings, as seen by human eyes, are, as it were, projections on the page of history. An illustration may help. A telegraph cable, whether cut straight through or on the slope, will present to view exactly the same combination of copper and iron wire, gutta-percha and tarred yarn; but in the elliptical section the elements will appear in more extended order than in the circular section: so the same features, which to us appear separate and successive, when viewed from the higher level of heavenly thought may be seen as forming parts of one act. The various advents of Christ may thus be viewed as forming elements in one Advent, which is progressive from one side, but complete from another. The morning spreads itself in every direction over the forehead of the sky, and yet is but one morning. All the varying scenes from the First Advent to the Second are but the beatings of the wings of God's new day. "It is," as the prophet expressed it in language of glorious paradox, "It is one day, known to the Lord, neither clear nor dark, but one day, at whose eventide it shall be light."

If this be true, there is no necessity for leaping to the conclusion that, when the sacred writers warned their hearers that the coming of the Lord was near, they were mistaken, or that they sought to sustain the fainting hopes of the early Church by expectations which have proved false. Doubtless some did not understand the full and deep meaning of the words employed: doubtless many still clung to their carnal conceptions: but the apostolic language, whether from the pen of a St. Paul, St. Peter, or St. John, expresses the wider and truer thoughts of the coming of Christ. We find them anxious to remind those to whom they wrote that the idea of an immediate visible personal coming of Christ must not be allowed to gain possession of the mind. There were forces at work which must have their way before the end would come: seeds had been planted, and these must grow: the sowing and the harvest are linked together as one in the law of growth, and are yet separate, Thus the spirit of wilfulness and impatience is rebuked when men grasp the true thoughts of God. Yet it must not be supposed that the waiting Church of Christ will be disappointed of her hope, or that the heavenly Bridegroom will not come. He will come again; and all the preliminary and subordinate advents in judgment and in comfort will then be seen to have been earnests of the fulness of His coming. The interpreters are as men who stand upon a plain to watch the sunrise. When the first veil of night is withdrawn, and the starlight is somewhat paled, the more ardent than the rest will cry, "The dawn!"

but the rest answer, "Not yet." Then when the mountain peaks begin to flame as one wild cry, "The dawn!" and the rest will still reply, "Not yet." And when the landscape around catches its true colours, as time will say, "The dawn!" but only when the great and glorious orb leaps into view will all be one in crying, "The dawn! the dawn!" So is the coming of Christ. Some look up in the faint lightening in the moral atmosphere, and say, "Christ comes!" Others look to the reflected lights of truth proclaimed in the high pursuit to the world, and say, "Christ comes!" Others look to the general diffusion of knowledge, and say, "Christ comes!" They are right, and they are wrong: right, for it is indeed Christ who is thus enlightening the world: they are wrong, for there is a coming greater than these, when He will, in fuller manifestation of Himself, tabernacle with His people as their everlasting light.

IV. General Scope of this Book.

(1) *Its Aim.*—What is the aim of this book? The answers given, though various, have much in common. Some see in it a prediction of the overthrow of Paganism: others carry it further, and see the destruction of Papal Rome: others read in it the rise and fall of some future Anti-christ. Thus far the opinions vary: but in one respect there is agreement: the Revelation aims at assuring the Church of the advent of her Lord: it is the book of the Coming One. Every school of interpretation will admit this. Some indeed will say that the expectation raised was never fulfilled, but all appear to unite in regarding the Apocalypse as the book of the advent. We may take this as a key to its meaning; it proclaims Christ's coming and victory. But is it the victory of Christ over Paganism, or over Imperialistic Rome in Christendom, or over some third and future anti-christian power or powers? The true answer appears to be, It is the victory of Christ over all wrong-thoughtedness, wrong-heartedness, and wrong-agentedness: the pictures given in the visions and their counterparts not in one age only, but gather their fulfilment as the ages advance: the fall of Paganism is imprinted in the visions, as the downfall of the world-power of Imperial Rome is included; but the picture-prophecy is not exhausted, and will not be till every form of evil of which Pagan and Imperial Rome, of which the will beast and Babylon are types, has been overthrown. The ages are seen in perspective; the incidents separated from one another in historical sequence, are gathered into one prophetical scene, and the Apocalypse presents us with a variety of these prophetical scenes, which depict the salient features of the conquest of evil, the triumph and advent of Christ —"He comes" is the key. He comes when Paganism falls—He comes when Rome would force is cast down: He comes when worldliness falls—He comes, and His coming is spreading ever over the world, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Clouds may gather, and make the sky which separates the full day darker than those which preceded them, but still in every epoch looking up to the golden day; the line of conflict may advance and recede from time

to time, but it is a triumphant battle-field which is pictured. It is thus the book of the advent and victory of Christ.

But is it a book affording false hopes? Is it an echo of the wish of the early Christian Church, or is it a revelation from Christ to the waiting and perhaps impatient Church? I believe it is the latter. So far from the book giving colour to the expectation of an immediate personal coming of Jesus Christ, it seems distinctly to caution the early Christians against cherishing mistaken notions: "that day shall not come except there come a falling away first," was the caution of St. Paul; the caution of St. John, though expressed in pictorial form, is none the less emphatic. Let any one bear in mind the eager impatience of suffering Christians in early days, and let them read the Apocalypse, and they will learn that its undertone is, "Not yet, not yet," but still surely is He coming; not as you think, but as He thinks well, so is He coming. Let the seals furnish an illustration: the first shows an ideal conqueror; Christ, or the gospel of Christ, goes forth to conquer—it is the picture of the Church's hope; the vision tells her that her hope is right, Christ will conquer; but it is the prelude of visions which tell her that her expectation is wrong if she expects that the kingdom of Christ will be established without conflict, pain, suffering, and revolution. The succeeding seals are the pictures of the things which must needs be: the wars, the persecutions, the sorrows which will afflict the world because she will not accept her King; the parable of Luke xix. 11—27, and the emphatic warning language of Christ Jesus in Matt. xxiv. 4—14, are not forgotten in the Apocalypse. In it we are bidden to remember, that though the victory is sure, the victory is through suffering; we are shown scenes which betoken the prolonged sorrows of the faithful, the obstinate tenacity of evil, its subtle transformations, and the concealed powers by which it is sustained: we are thus, as it were, shown the world's drama from a heavenly view-point, not in continuous historical succession, but in its various essential features, it is in this dramatic—that it does not tell its story right on, but groups its episodes round convenient centres, bringing into special prominence successively the principles of God's world-government. It is thus an apocalypse unfolding in symbolical forms the characteristic features of the struggle between good and evil, when the power of the gospel enters the field; it is the revelation of the coming (*parousia*) of Christ, because it shows not only that He will come, but that He does come: that He who has been revealed, is being revealed, and will yet be revealed.

(2) *The Form.*—It is the symbolical form which hinders many in the right understanding of the book. "I am a man of the earth," wrote Goëthe; "I am a man of the earth, earthy; to me the parables of the unjust steward, the prodigal son, the sower, the pearl, the lost piece of money, &c., are more divine (if aught divine there be about the matter), than the seven messengers, candlesticks, seals, stars, and woes." This is only saying that symbolism employed in the one case was simpler than that employed in the

latter—simpler, that is to say, to Western minds; for it may perhaps be doubted whether the symbolism which to the Teutonic mind seemed so strange, may not have been simple enough to those who were accustomed to Hebrew symbolism. But however this may be, the general symbols of the book are not so difficult as might appear. There is not space at our disposal to enter upon a discussion of this in detail. Certain features, however, are worthy of notice. The geographical imagery needs attention: Jerusalem stands as the type of the good cause, Babylon as the type of the metropolis of the world-power: Jerusalem is thus the Church of Christ (this symbolism is in complete harmony with St. Paul and other apostolic writers, (comp. Gal. iv. 24—31; Heb. xii. 22, 23). Babylon is the emblem of Pagan Rome, but not only of Pagan Rome, for the Babylon type remains to this day: there are inspiring powers on the side of the heavenly Jerusalem—God is with her; she shall not be moved; the metropolis of evil has the assistance of evil powers: the dragon, the wild beast, and the false prophet are for a time with her. The family of evil bears a marked parallel to the family of good throughout the book: there is a trinity of evil powers on the side of Babylon the harlot, as the blessed Trinity are, with the bride, the heavenly Jerusalem. (See *Excursus B: The Wild Beast.*) The scenes in the great conflict range themselves round the members of these families of good and evil. The general features and elements of this struggle are depicted. There are numerical symbols: seven is the number of perfection, six of man's worldly perfection without God, four of the universe, three and a half of a limited period. There are seals, trumpets, and vials; the seals of the book which could only be opened by Christ betoken that the direction of earth's history and its explanation can be found only in Christ; the trumpets are the symbols of God's war against all forms of evil; the vials are the tokens of the retribution which falls upon those who turn not at the divine summons to righteousness. The strong symbolism of the book has a two-fold advantage: when the application of the visions are not to be exhausted in one age, the pictorial form is the most convenient to embrace the manifold fulfilments. Again, the author has clothed his thoughts in the "variously limiting, but reverential and only suitable drapery of ancient sacred language and symbolism, in the conviction that the reader would penetrate the veil and reach the sense" (Gebhardt).

(3) *The General Structure.* — The majority of critics see a seven-fold structure in the book. The commentators differ, as might be expected, as to the way in which this seven-foldedness of structure shows itself; but most of them arrange the different parts of the book in a seven-fold fashion. This is worthy of note, as the Fourth Gospel (see *Introduction to St. John's Gospel*) has been shown to have a similar seven-fold arrangement. When we notice the fondness of the seer for such an arrangement in the subordinate visions, it is not to be wondered at that the whole book should fall into seven groups; but we must be careful not to be carried away by our love of symmetry. The charts and

maps of Apocalyptic interpretation are often very Procrustean. The general structure of the book, however, may be noted.

There are :—

1. **The Preliminary Chapters.—Christ and His Church.**
   (1) THE VISION OF THE CHRIST (chap. i.).
   (2) THE MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES (chaps. ii., iii.).

2. **The Visions.**
   (1) THE VISION OF THE THRONED ONE (chap. iv.).
   (2) THE VISIONS OF THE CONFLICT, in two main sections.
      (*a*) *The conflict seen from the world side* (chaps. vi.—xi.):
         (*α*) The seven seals (chaps vi.—viii. 1).
         (*β*) The seven trumpets (chaps. viii. 2—xi.).
      (*b*) *The conflict seen from the heavenly side* (chaps. xii.—xx.):
         (*α*) The spiritual foes (chaps. xii.—xiv.).
         (*β*) The seven vials of retribution (chaps. xv., xvi.).
         (*γ*) The fall of foes (chaps. xvii.—xx.).
   (3) THE VISIONS OF PEACE (chaps. xxi., xxii. 1—6).

3. **The Epilogue** (chap. xxii. 6—21).

It will be seen that there is a moving onward from the more external to the deeper and more spiritual aspects of earth's story. The earlier visions (the seals, for example) show the ordinary phenomena of the world's story—war, famine, death, revolution. The next series (the trumpets) show us that there is another, even a spiritual war, going forward in the world, and that changes and revolutions are often tokens of the inner spiritual battle in life. These visions, however, are, so to speak, all in the sphere of earth: in the next series we are shown that the war carried on here is one which has its heavenly counterpart. The conflict is not simply between good men and bad, but between principalities and powers. (See an interesting article on "The Ideal Incarnation," by Dr. S. Cox, in the *Expositor*, Vol. II., p. 405.) There is a heavenly view-point of all things on earth: there are spiritual forces, the ideal Church, the unseen strength of God, and the hidden inspirations of evil. In this struggle all evil will be vanquished. The earthly manifestations of evil, as well as the unearthly inspirations of it, will fall; the great and arch-enemy will be overthrown; the true spiritual, eternal rest be reached, and the golden age be realised. We are thus taught, in this ever-deepening spirituality of the book, to look beneath the phenomena, to trace the subtle and unmasked principles which are at work, to separate between the false and the true, to believe in *ideals* which are not mere ideas, but the true thoughts of God, which will one day be made real in the eyes of men, and which are even now real to the eye of faith. Thus does the Book of Revelation become the unfolding of a dream which is from God. In it are painted the scenes of earth's history: the thirst of a nation's life and its passing groan; the tears and prayers of the unreckoned holy ones of earth; the

agony of half-despair which even the best have felt in the night of conflict, that has so often been the eve of triumph; the sustaining faith which has transfigured the weakling into a hero, and nerved the heart of a solitary saintship to do battle alone against a degenerate Church or a persecuting world; the silent victory of truth, or the unperceived growth of worldliness and falsehood. The book is thus a help and stay—not as yielding fruit to curiosity. It is not a manual of tiresome details: it is not meant to be a treasure-house of marvels for the prophetical archæologist: it is a book of living principles. It exhibits the force and fortune of truth as it acts upon the great mass of human society: it shows the revolutions which are the result. It shows the decay of the outward form, the release of the true germ, which will spring up in better harvests. It shows us how the corn of wheat may fall and die, and so bring forth much fruit. It shows us how evermore, from first to last, Christ is with us — encouraging, consoling, warning, helping, and leading us onward through conflict to rest.

V. Literature of the Apocalypse.—It is perfectly hopeless to touch so vast a subject as this. The mere list of works on the Apocalypse given in Darling's *Cyclopædia Bibliographica*, published in 1859, occupies fifty-two columns. A history of various interpretations is given in Lücke, *Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis;* a similar sketch is given by Bleek, *Lectures on the Apocalypse;* and Elliott (*Horæ Apocalypticæ*, vol. iv.) has presented us with an exhaustive and impartial account, *History of Apocalyptic Interpretations*, followed by *A Critical Examination and Refutation of the Three Chief Counter-schemes of Apocalyptic Interpretation;* and also of *Dr. Arnold's General Prophetic Counter-theory.* Dean Alford's article (*Greek Test.*) on "Systems of Interpretation," is lucid and compact.

Of Commentaries, leaving unnoticed earlier expositions, those of Vitringa, De Wette, Ewald, Bleek, Hengstenberg, Meyer, Ebrard, Auberlen, and Düsterdieck; of Hammond, Bishop Newton, Elliott, Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, Cunningham, Woodhouse, Moses Stuart, De Burgh, I. Williams, besides the works of Faber, Maitland, and Prof. Birks, are well known; and Dr. Currey's Notes on Revelation, in the *Christian Knowledge Society's Commentary*, add much to the value of a really useful work.

Of lectures, the late Professor Maurice's *Lectures* are full of thought and interest; and many are indebted to Dr. Vaughan (now Dean of Llandaff) for his *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, which are models of what expository lectures ought to be. Gebhardt's *Lehrbegriff der Apokalypse*, now accessible to English readers in Clarke's Foreign Translation Library—(Gebhardt's *Doctrine of the Apocalypse*) is a valuable addition to the literature of the subject; it contains a close and careful comparison between the doctrine of the Apocalypse and that of the Gospel and Epistles of St. John. Of other books may be mentioned—Rev. S. Garratt's *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, considered as the Divine Book of History; Prophetical Landmarks*, by Rev. H. Bonar; Dr. J. H. Todd's *Donnellan Lectures;*

and Bishop Wordsworth's *Hulsean Lectures*. *The Apocalypse*, by Rev. Charles B. Waller; *The Parousia, a Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of our Lord's Second Coming; The Life and Writings of St. John*, by Dr. J. M. Macdonald, of Princetown. On special points the following works may be noted:—On the Epistles to the Seven Churches, in addition to Archbishop Trench's indispensable work, and to Stier's well-known one, a valuable contribution has been given by Prof. Plumptre. On the Millennium: Bishop Waldegrave's "New Testament Millenarianism" (*Bampton Lectures*), and the Rev. Dr. Brown's work, entitled *Christ's Second Coming: will it be pre-Millennial?* On the Babylon of the Apocalypse: Bishop Wordsworth's *Rome, the Babylon of the Apocalypse*. On the types and symbols: Fairbairn's *Typology of Scripture;* Rev. Malcolm White's *Symbolical Numbers of Scripture;* and the essay on "The Formal Elements of 'Apocalyptics" prefixed to Lange's *Commentary on Revelation*. Of this last book, which has not been mentioned above, it is to be regretted that, with much that is most valuable, it should be disfigured by pedantry of style.

THE REVELATION
OF
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I. — (1) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and

Chap. i. 1—4. Preface.

A.D 96.

(1) **The Revelation of Jesus Christ.**—The book is a revelation of the things which are and the things which shall be. "John is the writer, but Jesus Christ is the author," says Grotius; and consistently with this the action of Christ is seen throughout. It is Christ who bids John write to the seven churches: it is Christ who opens the seven seals (chap. vi. 1), who reveals the sufferings of the Church (chap. vi. 9), who offers the prayers of the saints (chap. viii. 3), and delivers the little book to John (chap. x. 1—11). Thus it is seen that though the rise and fall of earth's history is included in the revelation, it is a revelation also of a living person; it is not the dull dead onward flow of circumstances, but the lives of men and nations seen in the light of Him who is the light of every man and the life of all history; and thus we learn that "only a living person can be the Alpha and Omega, the starting-point of creation and its final rest." The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of this prophecy, as of all others. The Father gives this to the Son whom He loves, and shows Him all things that Himself doeth.

Shortly.—On this word much controversy has turned. Its force, "speedily," affords a groundwork, and, it must be admitted, a plausible one, to the præterist school of interpreters, who hold that the whole range of Apocalyptic predictions was fulfilled within a comparatively short time after the Apostle wrote. The truth, however, seems to be that the words of God are of perpetual fulfilment: they are not only to be fulfilled; they have not only been fulfilled; but they have been and they are being fulfilled; and they yet will be fulfilled; and the principles which are enunciated by the Prophet, though "shortly" fulfilled, are not exhausted in the immediate fulfilment, but carry still lessons for the succeeding generations of mankind.

John—*i.e.*, the Apostle and Evangelist. The arguments in support of this identification are admitted even by the most captious critics to be conclusive. "The Apocalypse, if any book can be traced to him, must be ascribed

signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John: (2) who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. (3) Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those

to the Apostle John" (*Supernatural Religion*). (See *Excursus A.*) To many it will seem natural that John, the beloved disciple, should be the recipient of this revelation. Those who have been nearest to God learn most of His will. Such are friends, not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; and thus, as in the Old Testament to Abraham, the friend of God, and to Daniel, a man greatly beloved, so in the New Testament to the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom, are shown the things which God was about to do. "Mysteries are revealed unto the meek. The pure in heart shall see God. A pure heart penetrateth heaven and hell" (Thomas à-Kempis).

"More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair through faith and prayer,
A virgin heart in work and will."
—*Sir Galahad.*

(2) **Who bare record.**—Elsewhere as well as here. And he tells us of what he bore record—of the Word of God. The writer declares that the substance of his testimony and witness had been this Word of God. We have here an indication of what the general character of his teaching had been. It evidently had been a teaching laying stress on that aspect of truth which is so forcibly set before us in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles bearing the name of John. (Comp. chap. xix. 11; John i. 1, 14; 1 John i. 1, *et al.* Note also that the words "record," "testimony," "witness," found in this verse, recur in the Gospel and Epistles. Comp. John v. 31—40; xix. 35; xxi. 24.)

(3) **Blessed is he that readeth . . . prophecy.**—Any declaration of the principles of the divine government, with indications of their exemplification in coming history, is a prophecy. Sometimes the history which exemplifies these principles is immediate, sometimes more remote; in other cases (as, I venture to believe, is the case with the predictions of this book) the events are both immediate and remote. The prophecy gives us the rule, with some typical application illustrative of its method of working; after-history affords us the working out of various examples. We, then, as living actors in the world, have not only to read and hear, but to keep—keep in mind and action those principles which preside over the development of all human history (Jas. i. 22). The word "keep" is in itself a proof to me that the whole fulfilment of the Apocalypse could not have been exhausted in the earliest times, nor reserved to the latest times of the Church's history, but that its predictions are applicable in all eras.

The time is at hand.—In the apostolic mind this was always true, though the restless idleness of the

things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

(4) JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is,[a] and which

[a] Ex. 3, 14.

Chap. 1. 4—8. Salutation to the seven churches. Christ the key of history.

Thessalonians was blamed (2 Thess. ii. 2, and iii. 11, 12). The spirit of vigilance and of ever-readiness for both the providential advents and the final advent of the Christ was enjoined. (Comp. Rom. xiii. 12; Jas. v. 9; 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9.)

(4) **JOHN to the seven churches** (or, *congregations*) **which are in Asia.**—It is needless to observe that the Asia here is not to be regarded as co-extensive with what we know as Asia Minor. It is the province of Asia (comp. Acts ii. 9, 10; xvi. 6, 7), which was under a Roman proconsul, and embraced the western portion of Asia Minor. In St. John's time it consisted of a strip of sea-board, some 100 square miles in extent. Its boundaries varied at different periods; but roughly, and for the present purpose, they may be regarded as the Caycus on the north, the Mæander on the south, the Phrygian Hills on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west.

Seven churches.—It has been maintained by some (notably by Vitringa) that the epistles to the seven churches are prophetic, and set forth the condition of the Church in the successive epochs of its after-history. The growth of error, the development of schisms, the gloom of superstition, the darkness of mediæval times, the dawn of the Reformation, the convulsions of after-revolutions, have been discovered in these brief and forcible epistles. Such a view needs no formal refutation. The anxiety for circumstantial and limited fulfilments of prophecy has been at the root of such attempts. When we read God's words as wider than our thoughts we stand in no need of such desperate efforts at symmetrical interpretations; for the truth then is seen to be that words addressed to one age have their fitness to all; and that these epistles are the heritage of the Church in every epoch. In this sense the churches are types and representatives of the whole family of God. Every community may find its likeness here. This much is admitted by the best commentators of all schools. "The seven churches," says Chrysostom, "are all churches by reason of the seven Spirits." "By the seven," writes St. Augustine, "is signified the perfection of the Church universal, and by writing to the seven he shows the fulness of one." And the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," are, as has been well observed, a direct intimation that some universal application of their teaching was intended.

Grace be unto you, and peace.—Three apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John, adopt the same salutation. Not only is this a kind of link of Christian fellowship between them, but its adoption by St. John, after St. Paul had first used it, is a slight token that the

was, and which is to come; and from the

Apocalypse cannot be regarded (as some recent critics would have it) as an anti-Pauline treatise. As the Christian greeting, it transcends while it embraces the Greek and Hebrew salutations. There is no tinge of the sadness of separation; it is the greeting of hope and repose, grounded on the only true foundation of either, the grace of God, which is the well-spring of life and love.

From him which is, and which was, and which is to come (or, *which cometh*).—The phrase presents a remarkable violation of grammar; but the violation is clearly intentional. It is not the blunder of an illiterate writer; it is the deliberate putting in emphatic form the "Name of Names." "Should not," says Professor Lightfoot, "this remarkable feature be preserved in an English Bible? If in Ex. iii. 14 the words run, 'I AM hath sent me unto you,' may we not also be allowed to read here, from 'HE THAT IS, AND THAT WAS, AND THAT IS TO COME'?" The expression must not be separated from what follows. The greeting is triple: from Him which is, and which was, and which cometh; from the seven Spirits; and from Jesus Christ—*i.e.*, from the Triune God. The first phrase would therefore seem to designate God the Father, the self-existing, eternal One, the fount and origin of all existence. Professor Plumptre suggests that the phrase used here may be used in allusion and contrast to the inscription spoken of by Plutarch, on the Temple of Isis, at Sais: "I am all that has come into being, and that which is, and that which shall be; and no man hath lifted my vail." The heathen inscription identifies God with the universe, making Him, not an ever-being, but an ever-becoming, from whom personality is excluded: the Christian description is of the personal, everlasting, self-revealing God — who is, who was, and who *cometh*. We should have expected, after "is" and "was," "will be;" but there is no "will be," with an eternal God. With Him all *is;* so the word "cometh" is used, hinting His constant manifestations in history, and the final coming in judgment. This allusion to the Second Coming is denied by Professor Plumptre, but as he admits that the words, "He that cometh," used in the Gospels, and applied by the Jews to the Messiah, may be designedly employed here by the Apostle, it is difficult to see how the Advent idea can be excluded. The word appears to imply that we are to be always looking for Him whose "comings" recur in all history as the earnests of the fuller and final Advent.

From the seven Spirits.—The interpretation which would understand these seven Spirits to be the seven chief angels, though supported by names of great weight, is plainly untenable. The context makes it impossible to admit any other meaning than that the greeting which comes from the Father and the Son comes also from the Holy Spirit sevenfold in His operations, whose gifts are diffused among all the churches, and who divides to every man severally as He will. For corresponding thoughts in the Old Testament,

seven Spirits which are before his throne; (5) and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead,[a] and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us,

[a] 1 Cor. 15. 20; Col. 1. 18.

compare the seven lamps and seven eyes of Zechariah (chaps. iii. 9; iv. 2, 10), "the symbols of eternal light and all-embracing knowledge." It may not be inappropriate to note that Philo speaks of the number seven in its mystical import as identical with unity, as unity developed in diversity, and yet remaining one. This unity in diversity is the thought St. Paul seems anxious to keep before the minds of the Corinthians, lest their gifts should become the source of division. All work that one and self-same spirit (1 Cor. xii. 11). The after-recurrence in this book of the number seven is, I think, selected to support this thought of completeness and variety; the dramatic unity is preserved, though the scenes which are unfolded are amply diversified; and the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials, are not three successive periods, but three aspects of one complete period presided over by that one Spirit whose guidance may be seen in all ages, and in diverse ways. The Spirits are before the throne. This reference to the throne gives a touch of authority to the description. The Holy Spirit who pleads with men is the Spirit from God's Throne.

(5) **From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten** (or, *firstborn*) **of the dead, and the prince** (or, *ruler*) **of the kings of the earth.**—The triple title applied to Christ corresponds to the three ideas of this book. Christ the Revealing Prophet, the Life-giving High Priest, and the real Ruler of mankind.

The faithful witness.—There may be a reference here, it has been suggested by Professor Plumptre, to the bow in the cloud, which is described in Ps. lxxxix. 37 as the faithful witness. The coincidence of expression is remarkable: "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth; he shall stand fast as the sun before me, and as the faithful witness in heaven." The idea of testimony and witness is a favourite one with St. John, who records its use by our Lord Himself. (Comp. John iii. 32; v. 36; xviii. 37. See also Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 18. Comp. also the work of the Only Begotten as stated in John i. 18.)

The prince (or *ruler*) **of the kings of the earth.**—The message does not come from One who 'will be, but who *is* the true ruler of all earthly potentates. The disposition to dwell on the future and more visibly recognised reign of Christ hereafter, has tended to obscure the truth of His present reign. It is instructive to notice that this book, which describes so vividly the manifestations of Christ's kingdom (chaps. xi. 15; xii. 10), claims for Him at the outset the place of the real King of kings. Such was the Apostle's faith. "Above all emperors and kings, above all armies and multitudes, he thought of the Crucified

and washed us from our sins in his own blood,[b] (6) and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;[c] to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (7) Behold, he cometh with clouds;[d] and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him:[e] and all kindreds of the earth shall

[b] Heb. 9. 14.
[d] Matt. 24. 30.
[c] 1 Pet. 2. 5.
[e] Zech. 12. 10; John 19. 37.

as ruling and directing the course of history, and certain in His own due time to manifest his sovereignty" (Prof. Plumptre). "What are we to see in the simple Anno Domini of our dates and superscriptions, but that for some reason the great world-history has been bending itself to the lowly person of Jesus" (Bushnell). "A handful read the philosophers; myriads would die for Christ; they in their popularity could barely found a school; Christ from His cross rules the world" (Farrar, *Witness of History*). Such is a real kingship.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us.—Instead of "washed us," some MSS. read, "loosed us." There is only one letter's difference in the two words in Greek. The general tone of thought would lead us to prefer "washed," as the true reading. On a solemn occasion, which St. John remembered clearly, our Lord had said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." The thought of the "cleansing blood," intensified by the recollection of the water and blood which he had seen flowing from Christ's pierced side, often recurred to his mind (chap. vii. 13, 14; 1 John i. 7; v. 6—8).

(6) **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever** (or, *unto the ages*). — The symbol of washing in the last verse naturally leads on to the thought of consecration, accompanied by blood-sprinkling, to the work of the priest (Ex. xix. 6, 10; xxiv. 8; Heb. ix. 21). The book will declare the kingship and priesthood of the children of God—a sovereignty over human fears and sufferings—their priesthood in their lives of consecration, and their offering of themselves even unto death.

"And all thy saints do overcome
By Thy blood and their martyrdom."

The doxology here is two-fold: glory and dominion. The doxologies in which the Redeemed Church takes part grow in strength in the earlier chapters of this book. It is three-fold in chap. iv. 9—11; four-fold in chap. v. 13; and it reaches the climax of seven-fold in chap. vii. 12.

(7) **Behold, he cometh with clouds.**—Better, *with the clouds.* The reference to Christ's words (Mark xiv. 62) is undoubted. In the "clouds" St. Augustine sees the emblem of the saints of the Church, which is His body, who spread as a vast fertilising cloud over the whole world.

Every eye shall see him, and they also which (*they were who* = "whosoever") **pierced him.**—Here again is a reference to the incident of the piercing of Christ's side (John xix. 34), recorded only by St. John.

wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (8) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (9) I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the

Chap. i. 9–11. The occasion of the vision.

Shall wail because of him. —Or, *shall wail over Him.* The prophecy in Zech. xii. 10 is the suggesting one of this. But the passage in Zechariah describes the mourning of grief over the dead; the passage here is the mourning towards one who was dead, and is alive. He towards whom they now direct their sorrow is the One over whom they should have wailed when He was laid in His tomb.

(8) **The beginning and the ending.** — These words are of doubtful authority; they are in all probability taken from chap. xxii. 13, and interpolated here. The description of the verse applies, with little doubt, to our Lord, and the words are a strong declaration of His divinity.

The Almighty. — The word thus rendered is, with one exception (2 Cor. vi. 18), peculiar to this book in the New Testament.

(9) **I John, who also am your brother . . .** — More literally, *I John, your brother and fellow partner in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, . . . because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* He was a fellow-sharer of tribulation with them, and he shares that patience which brings experience, because it is a patience in Jesus. It is not patience for Christ, like 2 Thess. iii. 5, nor patience of Christ, but rather patience which draws its life and energy of endurance from Him.

Patmos.—Professor Plumptre notices how little the scenery of Patmos colours the Apocalypse. "The vision that follows is all but unaffected by the external surroundings of the seer. At the farthest, we can but think of the blue waters of the Mediterranean —now purple as wine, now green as emerald, flushing and flashing in the light as the hues on the plumage of a dove." The position of the Apostle in Patmos was probably that of an exile, free to roam where he would within the limits of the island. There was at any rate no limit of chains or guard, as in the case of St. Paul (Acts xxviii. 16, 20). He tells us what was the cause of his exile. It was his faithfulness in proclaiming, as we know he loved to do, *the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* "St. John, proclaiming the Word of God, who was before all worlds, who had been made flesh and dwelt among men, who was the King of kings and Lord of lords, struck a blow at the worship as well as the polity of the Roman empire. He opposed the God-man to the man-god" (*Maurice on the Revel.*, p. 20). The contest is incessantly the same.

testimony of Jesus Christ. [10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice,

False creeds ever aim to deify man. "Ye shall be as gods" is their motto and their bible. "Emmanuel," is the motto of the true faith—

> "The Lord was God, and came as man; the Pope
> Is man, and comes as God."—*Harold.*

The crucified, suffering Saviour, God in Christ, very God, and one with man in sorrow, was the stumbling-block in the past, and is the ideal which offends many now. (See Bp. Alexander's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 30, *et seq.*) The terms of the conflict remain unchanged through the ages. (Comp. chap. vi. 9.)

[10] **I was** (or, *I became*) **in the Spirit.**—The mind, drawn onward by the contemplation of things spiritual, is abstracted from the immediate consciousness of outward earthly forms of life. In great natures this power is usually strong. Socrates is related to have stood rapt in thought for hours, and even days, unconscious of the midday heat, or the mocking wonder of his comrades. To high-souled men, set upon the spiritual welfare of the race, this power of detaching themselves from the influence of the outward is the result of their earnestness; the things spiritual are to them the real; the things seen are temporal. It is the Holy Spirit alone which can give the power of this spiritual abstraction; but it is through the ordinary use of means that this power is bestowed. In St. John's case it was on the Lord's Day that this spiritual rapture was vouchsafed.

The Lord's day.—There is no ground whatever for the futurist interpretation that this expression refers to the "Day of the Lord," as in 2 Thess. ii. 2. The phrase in this latter passage is totally different. The phrase here is, *en te kuriake hemera.* The adjective is applied by St. Paul (perhaps coined by him for the purpose) to the Lord's Supper: from the Supper it came to be applied to the day on which Christians met for the breaking of bread. The day is still called κυριακὴ (*kuriake*) in the Levant. On the Lord's Day the vision came to the Apostle. It was the hour of sweetest, closest communion, when the memories of Christ risen, and the fellowship he had enjoyed at Ephesus, would work on his spirit, and aid in raising him in highest adoration, like St. Paul (2 Cor. xii. 2—4). When so rapt, he heard a voice, strong, clear, and resonant as a trumpet. The Apostle's voice could not be heard among his beloved flock at Ephesus; but there was a voice which would reach from the exile at Patmos, not to Ephesus and its sister churches, but to all churches and throughout all time. The mouth which persecution closes God opens, and bids it speak to the world. So St. Paul, through the Epistles of his Captivity, still speaks. Luther, by his translation of the Bible, spoke from his confinement at Wartburg; and Bunyan, by his divine allegory, shows how feeble were the walls of his cell at Bedford to silence the voice of God. If speech be silvern and silence golden, it is also true in the history of the Church that from the captivity of her teachers

as of a trumpet, (11) saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (12) And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

Chap. i. 12—20 The vision of the Revealer Himself.

---

she has received her most abiding treasures.

(11) **I am Alpha and Omega.**—In this verse we pass from St. John to Him who was the Word, of whom St. John gave testimony. He who is the faithful witness now speaks. "What thou seest, write," &c. The previous words, "I am Alpha," &c., are not found in the best MSS. The words "which are in Asia," are also omitted.

The seven churches.—There were more than seven churches in Asia Minor; but the number selected indicates completeness. Thus, though having special reference to the conditions of those churches, the epistles may be regarded as epistles conveying ever appropriate lessons to the churches of succeeding ages. The names of the seven churches are enumerated, as they would naturally be by a person writing from Patmos. "First, Ephesus is addressed, as the Asiatic metropolis, and as the nearest church to Patmos; then the other churches on the western coast of Asia; then those in the interior" (Wordsworth).

(12) **Seven golden candlesticks.**—Comp. the vision in Zech. iv. 2—11. It has been observed that there is a difference in the two visions. In Zech., as in Ex. xxv. 31, 32, the seven branches are united, so as to form one candlestick; here there are said to be seven candlesticks; and from this supposed difference it is argued that we have a hint of the variety of the Christian churches, as distinguished from the singleness of the Jewish Church. But is it not more probable that what St. John saw was the old familiar seven-branched candlestick, identical in form with that which has been rendered familiar to all by the Arch of Titus, but that as the mention of the seven churches was then fresh in his mind, his eye fell rather upon the seven limbs and seven lights than on the whole candlestick, especially if, as Professor Plumptre suggests, the figure of the Christ concealed part of the main stem? Thus to his view the separate individuality of the churches, and their real union in Him who was the Light, would rather be symbolised. Thus, too, the external teachings of the earlier symbols are not disturbed: the new revelation illumines the types and shadows of the older. "These symbols were intended to raise them out of symbols; the truths were to throw light on the parables, rather than the parables on the truths. Men were to study the

(13) and in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. (14) His head and *his* hairs *were* white like

visions of an earlier day by the revelations of that day" (Maurice, *Apocalypse*, p. 22).

(13) **In the midst of the seven candlesticks** (the word "seven" is omitted in some of the best MSS) **one like unto the Son of man.**—"He who kindled the light to be a witness of Himself and of His own presence with men was indeed present." He was present the same as He had been known on earth, yet different—the same, for He is seen as Son of Man; the same as He had been seen on the Resurrection evening; the same as he appeared to Stephen; the same Jesus, caring for, helping and counselling His people: yet different, for He is arrayed in the apparel of kingly and priestly dignity. He is robed to the foot with the long garment of the high priest. St. John uses the same word which is used in the LXX. version of Ex. xxviii. 31, to describe the robe of the Ephod. (Comp. Zech. iii. 4.) It has been understood by some, however, to indicate the "ample robe of judicial and kingly power." There is in the vision a combination of both thoughts. He is the King-Priest who is seen by the Evangelist, the Melchisedec whom the Epistle to the Hebrews had so gloriously set forth (Heb. v. 9, 10; vi. 20; especially vii. 1—17). He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. The girdle is not around the loins, as though ready for action and toil (Luke xii. 35), but it is worn as by one who rests from toil in the "repose of sovereignty." So, according to Josephus (*Ant.* iii. 7, § 2), the Levitical priests were girdled. The girdle is of gold, not interwoven with gold, as was the high priest's girdle (Ex. xxviii. 8), but pure gold, the emblem of a royal presence. (Comp. Isa. xi. 5; Dan. x. 5; Eph. vi. 14.)

(14) **His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.**—The whiteness here is thought by some to be the token of the transfiguration in light of the glorified person of the Redeemer. "It is the glorious white which is the colour and livery of heaven." This doubtless is true; but it appears to me a mistake to say that there is no hint here of age. It is argued that the white hair of age is a token of decay, and that no such token would have place here; but surely this is straining a point, and making a mere emblem an argument. Age and youth alike have their glories; the glory of young men is their strength; the hoary head, too, the token of experience, dignity, authority, is the glory of age. Physically, white hair may be a sign of decay; typically it never is, else the effort to produce the appearance of it in the persons of monarchs and judges would never have been made. The white head is never in public sentiment other than the venerable sign of ripe knowledge, mature judgment, and

wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire; (15) and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as

solid wisdom; and as such it well betokens that full wisdom and authority which is wielded by the Ancient of Days, who, though always the same in the fresh dew of youth, is yet *from* everlasting, the Captain of salvation, perfect through suffering, radiant in the glorious youthhood of heaven, venerable in that eternal wisdom and glory which He had with the Father before the world. (Comp. Dan. vii. 9.) "He was one," Saadias Gaon beautifully says, "with the appearance of an old man, and like an old man full of mercies. His white hair, His white garments, indicated the pure, kind intentions He had to purify His people from their sins."

His eyes were as a flame of fire.—Comp. chap. xix. 12; Dan. x. 6. The eyes of the Lord, which are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, are here described as like unto fire, to express not merely indignation (He had looked once on the Jewish rulers in indignation) against evil, but determination to consume it; for our God is a consuming fire, purging away sin from those who forsake sin, and consuming in their sin those who refuse to be separated from it. (See chap. xx. 9; Dan. vii. 9, 10; Jude, verse 7.)

(15) **His feet like unto fine brass.**—The feet, like the feet of the ministering priests of Israel, were bare, and appeared like *chalcolibanus* (fine brass). The exact meaning of this word (used only here) is not certain. The most trustworthy authors incline to take it as a hybrid word, half Greek, half Hebrew—*chalcos*, brass, and *labân*, white, to whiten—and understand it to signify brass which has attained in the furnace a white heat. "Such technical words were likely enough to be current in a population like that of Ephesus, consisting largely of workers in metal, some of whom—if we may judge from the case of Alexander the coppersmith (Acts xix. 34; 2 Tim. iv. 14)—were, without doubt, Jews. I believe the word in question to have belonged to this technical vocabulary. It is at any rate used by St. John as familiar and intelligible to those for whom he wrote" (Prof. Plumptre in the *Epistles to Seven Churches, in loco*).

His voice as the sound (better, *voice*, as the same word—*phoné*—is used twice, and translated first "voice" and then "sound" in our English version) **of many waters.**—Daniel described the voice of the Ancient of Days as the voice of a multitude (Dan. x. 6); but the voice of the multitude was in earlier Hebrew writings compared to the sound of the waves of the sea, which the voice of the Lord alone could subdue (Ps. lxv. 7; xciii. 4). This image the Evangelist adopts to describe the voice of Christ—strong and majestic, amid the Babel-sounds of earth. That voice, whose word stilled the sea, sounds as the waves of the sea, which St. John heard Him rebuke.

the sound of many waters. (16) And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance *was* as the

(16) **And he had** (or, *having*) **in his right hand seven stars.**—The stars are explained later on (verse 20) to be the emblems of the angels of the seven churches; they are described as stars in His right hand; they, perhaps, appeared as a wreath, or as a royal and star-adorned diadem in His hand. (See Isa. lxii. 3.) It expresses their preciousness in Christ's sight, and the care He takes of them. A similar emblem is used of Coniah (Jer. xxii. 24), where he is compared to the signet upon God's right hand.

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.—There need be no doubt about the meaning here: the imagery of the Bible elsewhere is too explicit to be mistaken; it is the sword of the Spirit, even the word of God, which is here described; it is that word which is sharper than any two-edged sword, and which lays bare the thoughts and intents of the soul (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12. Comp. Isa. xlix. 2). This is the weapon with which Christ will subdue His enemies; no carnal weapon is needed (2 Cor. x. 4). Those that take any other sword in hand than this to advance His kingdom will perish with the weapon to which they have appealed (chap. xiii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 52), but those who arm themselves with this will find it mighty through God. With this weapon of His word He Himself fights against His adversaries (chaps. ii. 12, 16; xix. 15, 21); with this He lays bare the hidden hypocrisies of men, cuts off the diseased members, and wounds that He may heal.

> "The sword wherewith Thou dost command,
> Is in Thy mouth, and not Thy hand."

It is a *two-edged* sword; it has the double edge of the Old Testament and the New; "the Old Testament, cutting externally our *carnal;* the New Testament internally our *spiritual* sins" (Richard St. Victor). It has the double edge of its power to rebuke sin and self-righteousness; the evil of wrong-doing and the evil motives which wait on right-doing; the two edges of which will cut off sin from man, or else man in his sin. (Comp. Isa. xi. 4, and 2 Thess. ii. 8.) The Greek word here rendered "sword" is used six times in this book, and only once (Luke ii. 35) elsewhere in the New Testament.

His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.—It is the spiritual truth which gives the splendour to such descriptions as these. The dazzling glory of Him who is the Sun of Righteousness is intolerable to human eyes. There is no marvel in this when we remember that He is the brightness of His Father's glory, and that the Father dwells "in that light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). It is the lustre of holiness and righteousness which is here signified, and which "the eye of sinful man may not see," but of which

sun shineth in his strength.
(17) And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.
And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first

saints and angel messengers may catch a faint reflection; so that the angel's face may look like lightning (Matt. xxviii. 3), and "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). (Comp. the shining of Moses' face, Ex. xxxiv. 29.)

(17) **I fell at his feet as dead.**—At the sight of Him, the Evangelist fell as one dead. "Was this He whom upon earth St. John had known so familiarly? Was this He in whose bosom he had lain at the Last Supper, and said, 'Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?' When I saw Him thus transformed, thus glorified, I fell at His feet as one dead. Well might such be the effect, even upon the spirit of a just man made perfect—and St. John was still in the body—of such an open revelation of the risen glory of Christ" (Dr. Vaughan). It was pity, and the pang felt at the severity of retribution which overtook sin, which made Dante fall as a dead body falls (*Inferno*, v.); it is the felt consciousness of unworthiness which seems to have overcome the Evangelist. This consciousness has its witness outside the Bible as well as in it. "Semele must perish if Jupiter reveals himself to her in his glory, being consumed in the brightness of that glory." (Comp. Ex. xxxiii. 18, 20, "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live.") For every man it is a dreadful thing to stand face to face with God. Yet the consciousness of this unworthiness to behold God, or to receive a near revelation of His presence, is a sign of faith, and is welcomed as such. Of him who said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof," Christ said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. viii. 8—10).

He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.—The words "unto me" should be omitted. The gesture is designed to give the assurance of comfort; the hand which was raised up to bless (Luke xxiv. 51), which was reached forth to heal the leper, to raise the sinking Peter (Matt. xiv. 31), and to touch the wounded ear of Malchus, is now stretched out to reassure His servant; and the words, like those which John had heard upon the Mount of Transfiguration, and when toiling against the waves of the Sea of Galilee, encourage him not to be afraid. (Comp. Dan. x. 10.)

I am the first and the last.—The "last" must not be taken here to mean the least and lowest, as though it referred to our Lord's humiliation; the last points forwards, as the *first* points backwards. He was before all things, and so the *first*; and though all things change, folded up as a vesture, yet His years shall not fail, and so He is the *last*. "The *first*, because all things are from Me; the *last*, because to Me are all things" (Richard of St. Victor). (Comp. Col. i. 16—18; Heb. i. 11, 12.) This pre-eminence of first

and the last: [a] [18] *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; | [a] Isa. 41. 4. & 44. 6. | and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and

and last is thrice claimed for the Lord Jehovah in Isaiah (chaps. xli. 4; xliv. 6; xlviii. 12), and thrice for the Lord Jesus in this book (in this passage, in chap. ii. 8, and chap. xxii. 13).

[18] **I am he that liveth, and was dead.**—Better, *and the living One* (omit the words "I am"); *and I became dead; and, behold, I am alive* (or, *I am living*) *unto the ages of ages* (or, *for evermore*). "Amen" is omitted in the best MSS. This verse must be carefully kept in connection with the preceding, as the description should go on without pause. He is the living One—not merely one who once was alive, or is now alive—but the One who has "life in Himself, and the fountain and source of life to others, John i. 4; xiv. 6; the One who hath immortality," 1 Tim. vi. 16 (Trench). Yet He became dead. There are two wonders here: the living One becomes dead, and the dead One is alive for evermore. It is another form of the glorious truth and paradox of which the Apostles were so fond (Phil. ii. 8, 9; Heb. ii. 9). Comp. Christ's words, Luke ix. 24, and xiii. 43, which contain promises which He only could make who could say, "I have the keys of death and of Hades." The order of these words has been transposed in our English version. The true order is the more appropriate order, "For Hades is the vast unseen realm into which men are ushered by death; dark and mysterious as that realm was, and dreaded as was its monarch, our risen Lord has both under His power. The keys are the emblems of His right and authority." (Comp. chap. iii. 7, 8.) It is not of the second death that He speaks; our Lord is here seen as the conqueror of that clouded region, and that resistless foe which man dreaded. (Comp. John xi. 25; Heb. ii. 15.) Comp. Henry Vaughan's quaint poem, "An Easter Hymn"—

> "Death and darkness get you packing,
> Nothing now to man is lacking;
> All your triumphs now are ended,
> And what Adam marred is mended;
> Graves are beds now for the weary,
> Death a nap to wake more merry."

Christ had spoken before of the *gates* of hell (Matt. xvi. 18), and of the keys (Comp. also 1 Pet. iii. 19). The key of the grave was one of the four keys which the Eternal King committed to no ministering angel, but reserved for himself (so Targum and Talmud). The whole verse affirms the undying power and inalienable authority of our Master, and is a fitting prelude to a book which is to show the inherent divine tenacity of Christianity. The Church lives on because Christ its head lives on (John xiv. 19). The resurrection power which the Lord showed is to be reflected in the history of His Church. "The greatest honour is due to Christianity," says Goethe, "for continually proving its pure and noble origin by coming forth again, after the great aberrations into which human perversity has led it, more speedily than was expected, with its primitive special charm as a mission . . . for the relief of human necessity."

have the keys of hell and of death. (19) Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; (20) the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER II.—(1) Unto the angel of the church

(19) **Write the things which thou hast seen** (better, *sawest*).—It is well to notice the small connecting word "then," which has been omitted in the English. It gives the practical thought to the whole of the previous vision. This vision is to be described for the benefit of the Church of Christ, that she may never forget Him who is the foundation on which she rests; the true fountain of her life; and in whom she will find the source of that renewing power to which the last Note alludes. In the history of the faith it will be always true that they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength (Isa. xl. 28—31). Lest, then, at any time the saints of God should be tempted to cry that "their judgment was passed over from their God," the Evangelist is bidden first to detail this vision of Him who is the Life and Captain of His people. He is also to write *the things which are*—those eternal principles and truths which underlie all the phenomena of human history; or the things which concern the present state of the churches—*and the things which are about to be after these things*—those great and wondrous scenes of the fortunes of the Church and of the world which will be unfolded.

(20) **The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand.**—Having bidden him write the meaning of this mystery, or *secret*, He gives to St. John an explanatory key: "The seven stars are angels of seven churches (or *congregations*): and the seven candlesticks" (omit the words "which thou sawest") "are seven churches." The angels have been understood by some to be guardian angels; but it is difficult to reconcile words of warning and reproof (as in chap. ii. 4, 5), and of promise and encouragement (as in chap. ii. 10), with such a view. More probable is the view which takes the angel to be the ideal embodiment (so to speak) of the Church. The more generally adopted view is that the angel is the chief pastor or bishop of the Church. The description of them as stars favours this view. Similar imagery is applied elsewhere to teachers, true and false (Dan. xii. 3; Jude 13. Comp. Rev. viii. 10, and xii. 4). It is stated that the word "angel" was applied to the president in the Jewish synagogue. See, however, *Excursus A.*

II.

(1) **Unto the angel of the church of** (literally, *in*) **Ephe-**

Chap. ii. 1—7. Epistle to the Church in Ephesus.

of Ephesus write; These things saith | he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst

---

sus.—On the word "angel," see Note on chap. i. 20, and *Excursus A*. Adopting the view that the angel represents the chief pastor or bishop of the Church, it would be interesting to know who was its presiding minister at this time; but this must be determined by another question, viz., the date of the Apocalypse. Accepting the earlier date—*i.e.*, the reign of Nero, or (with Gebhardt) of Galba—the angel is no other than Timothy. Some striking coincidences favour this view. Labour, work, endurance, are what St. Paul acknowledges in Timothy, and which he exhorts him to cultivate more and more (2 Tim. ii. 6, 15; iv. 5). Again, against false teachers he warns him (1 Tim. i. 7). Further, there is "a latent tone of anxiety" in the Epistles to Timothy. The nature with which he had to do was emotional even to tears, ascetic, devout; but there was in it a tendency to lack of energy and sustained enthusiasm. "He urges him to stand up, to rekindle the grace of God, just as here there is a hint of a first love left." (See Prof. Plumptre, *Ep. to Seven Churches*.)

Ephesus.—The chief city of Ionia, and at this time the most important city in Asia. It possessed advantages commercial, geographical, and ecclesiastical, and, in addition, great Christian privileges. It was a wealthy focus for trade; it reached out one hand to the East, while with the other it grasped Greek culture. Its magnificent temple was one of the seven wonders of the world; the skill of Praxiteles had contributed to its beauty. The fragments of its richly-sculptured columns, now to be seen in the British Museum, will convey some idea of its gigantic proportions and splendid decorations. But the religious tone induced by its pagan worship was of the lowest order. Degrading superstitions were upheld by a mercenary priesthood; the commercial instinct and the fanatical spirit had joined hands in support of a soul-enslaving creed, and in defence of a sanctuary which none but those devoid of taste could contemplate without admiration. But its spiritual opportunities were proportioned to its needs. It had been the scene of three years' labour of St. Paul (Acts xx. 31), of the captivating and convincing eloquence of Apollos (Acts xviii. 24), of the persistent labours of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts xviii. 26); Tychicus, the beloved and faithful, had been minister there (Eph. vi. 21); Timothy was its chief pastor.

These things saith he . . . —The titles by which Christ is described at the opening of the seven epistles are mainly drawn from chap. i. The vision is found to supply features appropriate to the needs of the several churches. The message comes in this Epistle from One who "*holdeth*" firmly in His grasp (a stronger word than "He that hath" of chap. i. 16), and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The Church at Ephesus needed to remember their Lord as such. The first love

of the seven golden candlesticks; (2) I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are

had gone out of their religion; there was a tendency to fall into a mechanical faith, strong against heresy, but tolerant of conventionalism. Their temptations did not arise from the prevalence of error, or the bitterness of persecution, but from a disposition to fall backward and again do the dead works of the past. There was not so much need to take heed unto their doctrine, but there was great need that they should take heed unto themselves (1 Tim. iv. 16). But when there is danger because earnestness in the holy cause is dying out, and the very decorum of religion has become a snare, what more fitting than to be reminded of Him whose hand can strengthen and uphold them, and who walks among the candlesticks, to supply them with the oil of fresh love? (Comp. Zech. iv. 2, 3; Matt. xxv. 3, 4.)

(2) **I know thy works.**—This phrase is probably common to all the epistles. See, however, Note on verse 9. It expresses the way in which all actions are naked and open before the eyes—those flame-like eyes (chap. i. 14)—of Him with whom we have to do (Pss. xi. 4, 5; cxxxix. 11, 12; Heb. iv. 13). The veneer of a formal faith might impose on the world, but it would not escape His scrutiny (Acts i. 24). He knows, too, and lovingly accepts, the unmarked and unrequited acts of true love (Matt. x. 42; xxvi. 13); and appreciates, amid all its failures, genuine loyalty to Him (John xxi. 17).

And thy labour (or, *toil*), **and thy patience.**—The same things which St. Paul had pressed on Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 25, 26). The first word signifies labour carried on unto weariness. The "patience" is more than passive endurance; it is, as Archbishop Trench says, a beautiful word, expressing the brave and persistent endurance of the Christian. But though thus possessed of endurance, He commends them that they could not endure evil men. In one sense, the lingering of this grace among them is the green leaf betokening better things; they have not lost the power of hating evil (Comp. Rom. xii. 9.) No man loves God truly who cannot hate evil (Ps. ci. 3).

And thou hast tried (literally, *didst try*) **them . . . and hast found them liars.**—St. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders of the appearance of false teachers (Acts xx. 28—31). Zeal for pure doctrine characterised the Ephesian Church. It is commended by Ignatius in his Epistle (*ad Eph.* vi.). The false apostles here spoken of are not, I think, to be identified with the Nicolaitanes of verse 6; that verse is introduced as a further ground of commendation, mitigating the censure of verses 4 and 5. The claims to be considered apostles, which the Ephesian Church had disposed of, affords additional evidence of the early date of the

not, and hast found them liars: [3] and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. [4] Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. [5] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else

---

Apocalypse. Such a claim could hardly have been put forward at a later date. But at the earlier periods such troublers of the Church were only too common (2 Cor. ii. 17; xi. 14. 15; Gal. i. 7; ii. 4; Phil. iii. 2, 3).

[3] **And hast borne.** — This verse needs some change to bring it into harmony with the best MSS. It should stand, *And hast* (or, *hadst*) *patience, and didst bear for My name's sake, and didst not weary.* In this last word there is a recurrence to the word (*kopos*) translated labour or toil in verse 2. They had toiled on to very weariness without wearying of their toil (Gal. vi. 9), just as they could not *bear* the evil and yet had *borne* reproaches for Christ's sake. "There is toil, and patience, and abhorrence of evil, and discernment, and again patience, and endurance, and unwearied exertion. What can be wanting here?" (Dr. Vaughan.)

[4] **Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.** — Better, *I have against thee that thou didst let go.* This is the fault, and it is no trifle which is blamed, as the word "somewhat" (which is not to be found in the original) might be taken to imply; for the decay of love is the decay of that without which all other graces are as nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 1—3), since "all religion is summed up in one word, Love. God asks this; we cannot give more; He cannot take less" (Norman Macleod, *Life*, i., p. 324). Great as the fault is, it is the fault which love alone would have detected. "Can any one more touchingly rebuke *than* by commencing, 'Thou no longer lovest me enough?'" It is the regretful cry of the heavenly Bridegroom recalling the early days of His Bride's love, the kindness of her youth, the love of her espousals (Jer. ii. 2. Comp. Hos. ii. 15). It is impossible not to see some reference in this to the language of St. Paul (which must have been familiar to the Ephesian Christians) in Eph. v. 23 — 33, where human love is made a type of the divine.

[5] **Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, . . . and do the first works.** —It is argued that we have here evidence that the later, or Domitian, date of the Apocalypse is the true one, since it describes a fall in spiritual life which might have occurred in thirty years, but would hardly have taken place in the few years—ten at the utmost—which elapsed between the visit of St. Paul (Acts xx. 29, 30) and the reign of Nero. But greater changes than a decay of this kind have passed over communities in equally short periods. We have seen nations pass from imperialism to republicanism, from the fever-heat of radicalism to the lethargy of conservatism, in shorter space.

I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of

Has not the past decade shown marvellously rapid movements in the Church of our own land? The change, moreover, in the Ephesian Church was not so great as the advocates of the later apocalyptic date would describe. There is at present little outward sign of decay; they have resisted evil and false teachers; they have shown toil and endurance; but the great Searcher of hearts detects the almost imperceptible symptoms of an incipient decay. He alone can tell the moment when love of truth is passing into a noisy Pharisaic zealotism; when men are "settling down into a lower state of spiritual life than that which they once aimed at and once knew." Such a backsliding is "gentle, unmarked, unnoticed in its course." Further, it must not be forgotten that the Apostle did express his presentiments of coming danger, and specially warned the elders (Acts xx. 28) to take heed unto *themselves;* and in his Epistle (Eph. vi. 24) he gives in his closing words the covert caution that their love to Christ should be an incorruptible, unchanging love: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in *incorruption*" ("sincerity," English version). The advice now given is, "Repent, and do the first works." The advice is three-fold: remember, repent, reform. Remember the love of the past peaceful hours. "How sweet their memory still!" "There are ever goads," says Archbishop Trench, "in the memory of a better and a nobler past, goading him who has taken up with meaner things and lower, and urging him to make what he has lost once more his own." (Comp. Luke xv. 17, and Heb. x. 32.) So Ulysses urges his crew to further exertions.

> "Call to mind from whence ye sprung:
> Ye were not formed to live as brutes,
> But virtue to pursue and knowledge high."
>
> —*Inf.* xxvi.

Remember, but also repent, and repent in true practical fashion; for love will recognise no repentance but that which is confirmed in the doing of the first works. It must be a repentance whereby we forsake sin. "Christ does not say, 'Feel thy first feelings,' but 'Do the first works.'" "An ounce of reality," says a modern novelist, "is worth a pound of romance."

Or else I will come . . .—Better, *Or else I am coming unto* (or, *for thee, in a way which concerns*) *thee, and* (omit "quickly," which is wanting in the oldest MSS.) *will remove thy candlestick out of its place, unless thou shalt have repented—i.e.*, unless the change shall have come before the day of visitation. The "now they are hid from thine eyes," is not yet spoken for Ephesus.

(6) **But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds** (better, *works*) **of the Nicolaitanes.**—The Nicolaitanes were, as has been expressed, the Antinomians of the Asiatic Church. The life and conduct were little thought of, and the faith professed

the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. (7) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (8) And unto the angel of

was everything. Some have thought that they were a sect who derived their name, under some colourable pretext, from Nicolas the Proselyte; others hold that the name is purely symbolical, signifying "destroyer of the people," and that it is no more than the Greek form of Balaam. (See Notes on verses 14, 15, below.) The existence of a sect called Nicolaitanes in the second century is attested by Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.

(7) **He that hath an ear . . .** Or, *Let him that hath an ear, hear.* These words—an echo from the Gospels—recur in all the seven epistles. In the first three, however, they are placed before the promise; in the remaining four they follow it The heart which is hardened is the precursor of the ear that is deaf (Jer. vi. 10, and John xii. 37—40). The "spiritual truth" needs a spiritual organ for its discernment. These are truths, then, only heard

> "When the soul seeks to hear; when all is hushed,
> And the *heart* listens."
> —Coleridge, *Reflection.*

To him that overcometh (or, *conquereth*) **will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.**—The reference to conquering is a prominent feature of St. John's other writings. The word—used but once in the three Gospels (Luke xi. 22), and but once by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 21)—is found in John xvi. 33; 1 John ii. 13, 14; v. 4, 5; and occurs in all these epistles to the churches. The promise of the tree of life is appropriate (1) to the virtue commended: those who had not indulged in the license of Nicolaitanes shall eat of the tree of life; (2) to the special weakness of the Ephesians: to those who had fallen, and lost the paradise of first loving communion and fellowship with God (comp. Gen. iii. 8, and 1 John i. 3), is held out the promise of a restored paradise and participation in the tree of life. (Comp. chap. xxii. 2, 14; Gen. iii. 22.) This boon of immortality is the gift of Christ—I will *give*. It is tasted in knowledge of God and of His Son (John xvii. 3); it is enjoyed in their presence (chap. xxii. 3, 4).

(8) **Smyrna**, the modern *Ismir*, now possessing a population of about 150,000. Its mercantile prosperity may be measured by its trade. In 1852 the export trade amounted to £1,766,653—about half of this being with England. The imports in the same year were £1,357,339. It has always been considered one of the most beautiful cities in Asia. It was situated in the ancient province of Ionia, a little north of Ephesus—next it, as Archbishop Trench says, in natural order, and also in spiritual. Its position was favourable for commerce. In olden times, as now, it commanded the trade of the

the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; (9) I

Levant, besides being the natural outlet for the produce of the Hermus valley. The neighbourhood was peculiarly fertile; the vines are said to have been so productive as to have yielded two crops. There are indications that intemperance was very prevalent among the inhabitants. Servility and flattery may be added, for the people of Smyrna seem to have been astutely fickle, and to have been keen in preserving the patronage of the ruling powers. In one of their temples the inscription declared Nero to be "the Saviour of the whole human race." The city was specially famed for its worship of Dionysos. Games and mysteries were held yearly in his honour. Its public buildings were handsome, and its streets regular, One of its edifices used as a museum proclaimed, in its consecration to Homer, that Smyrna contested with six or seven other cities the honour of being the birthplace of the poet.

The angel of the church in Smyrna.—We have no means of determining certainly who was the person here addressed. Many who accept the Domitian date of the Apocalypse argue that Polycarp was at this time the bishop or presiding minister at Smyrna. Even on the supposition that this is the true date, it seems exceedingly doubtful that this was the case. It can only be true on the supposition that the episcopate of Polycarp extended over sixty years. Polycarp was martyred A.D. 156. We know from Ignatius, who addresses him in A.D. 108 as Bishop of Smyrna, that his ministry lasted nearly fifty years. It seems too much to assume that his episcopate commenced eight or ten years before. Of course, if we adopt the earlier date of the Apocalypse, the Epistle must have been written before Polycarp's conversion—probably before his birth. But though we are thus constrained to reject the identification which we would willingly adopt, it is well to remember that Polycarp is the living example of the language of the epistle, and that, as Professor Plumptre has said, "In his long conflict for the faith, his stedfast endurance, his estimate of the fire that can never be quenched, we find a character on which the promise to him that overcometh had been indelibly stamped."

The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.—Or better, *who became dead, and lived again.* From chap. i. 17, 18, we have selected the title most fitted to console a church whose trial was persecution. In all vicissitudes, the unchanging One (Heb. vii. 3 and xiii. 8), who had truly tasted death, and conquered it even in seeming to fail, was their Saviour and King. Some have seen in these words, "dead and lived again," an allusion to the story of the death and return to life of Dionysos—a legend, of course, familiar to Smyrna.

(9) **I know thy works.**—Some would omit the word "works;" but the phrase "I know thy works" is admitted to be genuine in five out of the seven epistles; and it certainly seems natural to conclude

know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. (10) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be

Chap. ii. 8—11. The Epistle to the Church in Smyrna.

---

that it was intended to be common to all, and to remind the Christian communities that whatever their state it was known to Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. "We go from one hour to another, from one day and year to another, and what is once fairly past in our doing and omitting and suffering is scarcely regarded by us any more; it is like water that has flowed away. But into the omniscience of Christ all things are taken up" (Bengel).

Tribulation.—If persecution brought upon them poverty, it was the means also of unfolding to view their possession of the "true riches;" they were rich in honour, in that they were counted worthy to suffer; they would also grow rich in the graces which sufferings bring (Rom. v. 3—5; Jas. i. 2—4).

Blasphemy.—They had to endure reviling as well as tribulation and poverty; and, harder still, to hear some who blasphemed that worthy name by which they were called.

Jews.—The Jews were foremost in this. "It was in the synagogue that they heard words which reproached them as Nazarenes, Galileans, Christians, Disciples of the Crucified" (Plumptre). Comp. Jas. ii. 7. It is interesting to notice that this characteristic hostility of the Jews was illustrated in the martyrdom of Polycarp. The Jews, "as was their wont," were foremost in bringing logs for the pile.

Synagogue of Satan.—The word "synagogue" is only once used to describe the Christian assembly (Jas. ii. 2); and even there it is called "*your* synagogue," not the "synagogue of God." In all other instances "the word is abandoned by the Jews." With the "synagogue of Satan" here, compare "the throne of Satan" (chap. ii. 13), "the depths of Satan" (chap. ii. 24).

(10) **Fear none of those things.** — Though Christ proclaimed His yoke to be easy, He also said that His followers must expect tribulation (John xvi. 33). He never conceals the difficulties or dangers of His service. (See Matt. x. 16—31; Acts ix. 16.) So here he proclaims, "Behold, the devil shall cast some . . . ."

The devil.—The LXX. translation gives this name to Satan, regarding him as the "accuser." (See Job i. 6; Zech. iii. 1, 2; and comp. Rev. xii. 10, where he is described as the "accuser of the brethren.")

Tried.—On the part of the adversary, the intention was that they might be *tempted* from their allegiance to Christ. The real effect

thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp

Chap. ii. 12—17. The Epistle to the Church in Pergamos.

would be that they who endured would come forth tested and approved. The suffering would be for "ten days." This is variously explained. Some think it applies to the periods of persecution; others understand it to mean a long persecution of ten years; others take it literally; others again view it as expressing completeness: the test would be thorough. The exhortation, "Be thou faithful (even) unto death," seems to favour this last; while the mention of "ten days" was, perhaps, designed to remind them that the period of trial was limited by Him who knew what they could bear, and would be but a little while when compared with the life with which they would be crowned.

A crown of life.—Rather, *the crown of life.* A crown was given to the priest who presided at the Dionysian Mysteries, which were celebrated with great pomp at Smyrna. A crown was also given at the Olympian Games, which were held at Smyrna. If there is any allusion to either of these, the latter would be the most natural. Some hold, however, the crown—though the word is *stephanos*, not *diadema*—is rather that of royalty than of victory. It is interesting to note that the narrative which tells of the death of Polycarp closes with words which it is difficult not to believe to be an allusion to this promise—"By his patience he overcame the unrighteous ruler, and received the crown of immortality" (*Smyrn. Ep.*).

(11) **He that overcometh** (or, *conquereth*) **shall not be hurt.**—The words used are precise, and give certainty to the promise.

The second death. — This phrase is a new one in Bible language. It is said that Jews were familiar with it through its use in the Chaldee Paraphrase. It clearly points to a death which is other than that of the body; it stands in contrast with the crown of *life.* The expressions of chaps. xx. 14, and xxi. 8, exclude the idea that a cessation of conscious existence is intended. The life of the spirit is the knowledge of God (John xvii. 3); the death of the spirit, or the second death, is the decay or paralysis of the powers by which such a knowledge was possible, and the experience of the awfulness of a life which is "without God."

(12) **Pergamos.**—Unlike Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamos was not distinguished as a commercial city. Its importance was due to other causes. A striking cone-shaped hill rose from the plain which bordered the northern banks of the Caicus. The hill was considered sacred. Its value as a strong

sword with two edges; (13) I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is:* and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. (14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,[1] who

natural fortress was early recognised, and it was used as a keep and treasury where local chieftains deposited their wealth. Its greatness as a city dated from Eumenes II., who was given by the Romans a large surrounding territory, and who fixed Pergamos as his royal residence. Under his auspices a splendid city—rich in public buildings, temples, art galleries, and with a library which rivalled that of Alexandria—rose into being. It has been described as a city of temples, "a sort of union of a pagan cathedral city, an university town, and a royal residence." It retained its splendour even after it passed by bequest to the Roman Republic, and was declared by Pliny to be a city unrivalled in the province of Asia.

Sharp sword with two edges.—See Note on chap. i. 16. The appropriateness of this language to the state of the church in Pergamos will best appear afterwards. (See Note on verses 15, 16.)

(13) **I know thy works.**—Here, as in verse 9, some MSS. omit "thy works," and read, "I know where thou dwellest—even where Satan's *seat* is." The word is translated elsewhere "throne," and should be here, "Where the throne of Satan is." But why should this pre-eminence in evil be assigned to Pergamos? The answer is difficult. Some leave it unsolved, saying that in the absence of any historical notice, it must remain one of the unsolved riddles of these epistles. Prof. Plumptre suggests that the general character of the city, its worship and customs, in addition to the persecutions which the Christians had encountered, may well account for the description. Æsculapius was worshipped as the "Preserver," or "Saviour." The symbol of the serpent must have been conspicuous among the objects of adoration in his temple. Curious arts were practised; lying wonders were claimed; persecution had extended to death. Such evil in such a city may have led to its being regarded as the very head-quarters of the enemy.

Hast not denied.—Better, *Thou didst not deny My faith in the days in which Antipas My faithful witness, was slain,* &c.

Antipas.—Short for Antipater. (Comp. Lucas and Silas, short for Lucanus and Silvanus.) Nothing is known of Antipas. There are later traditions respecting him, but these are probably fancy-drawn.

(14) **But I have a few things against thee.**—The word "few" is not to be taken as though the

taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. (15) So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. (16) Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (17) He that hath an ear, let him

ground of rebuke was a trifling one. The little leaven might leaven the whole lump; and those who had been brave unto death in the days of persecution had been less temptation-proof against more seductive influences. The church tolerated without remonstrance men holding [the word is the same as that used in commendation (verse 13), "Thou holdest (fast) My name"] "the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel; (namely) to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." Israel could not be cursed, but they might be made to bring a curse upon themselves by yielding to sin; so the counsel of Balaam was to tempt them through the women of Midian, and "Behold, these caused the children of Israel to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord" (Num. xxxi. 16). A similar temptation was endangering the Pergamene Church.

(15) **So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes**—*i.e.*, thou, as well as those of old, hast such teachers. There is little doubt that this is the connection between the verses, but opinions are divided whether we are on this account to identify the Balaamites with the Nicolaitanes, and to suppose that both names point to the same sect. The simplest meaning of the passage seems to be that the temptation to which the Israelites were exposed, is used to illustrate the temptations of the Pergamene Church, through the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. Both temptations lead in the same Antinomian direction. Such a tendency was early seen (comp. Rom. vi. 4; Gal. v. 13; Jude 4), and is not extinct now. "Is there not," writes Dr. Vaughan, "a vague, unavowed, unrealised idea that the Atonement has made sin less fatal, that even sin indulged and persisted in, may yet not work death?" To such and all who countenance them the warning is, "Repent; but if not, I am coming for thee, and will war with thee (note the change of person and number) with (literally, *in*—*i.e.*, armed with) the sword of My mouth."

(17) **To him that overcometh.**—The promise should run thus:—*To him that conquereth will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name graven, which no man knoweth, but he who receiveth it.* On this promise we may notice (1) that it is appropriate: those who refused to indulge the fleshly appetite are promised gratifications far higher, and hidden from the

hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden	manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth

gaze of sense; (2) the allusions are not all easy to understand. That to the *manna* is indeed obvious. Israel ate manna in the wilderness, and died; the Father gives the true bread from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die. The Son is that Bread of Life. He that eateth Him, even he shall live by Him (John vi. 35, 48, 57) —live, even though like Antipas he die; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses, but in the moral qualities which go to make up his character; and spiritual gifts are the food of these moral qualities, and these gifts are through Christ. But the promise is of *hidden* manna. Is the allusion to the pot of manna which had been laid up in the ark? There is no doubt that the Jews long cherished the belief that the ark and sacred treasures of the Temple had not perished. There was a fondly-held tradition that they had been buried by Jeremiah in a safe and secret spot on "the mountain where Moses climbed and saw the heritage of God, until the time that God shall gather His people again together, and show them His mercy" (2 Macc. ii. 4, 7). This "hidden manna," so longed for by an afflicted race, may have suggested the use of the word "hidden"; but the sacred writer would become anxious to bring out the spiritual truth that the fountains of Christian life are hidden (Col. iii. 3), the world knoweth us not. Like the fire in the Interpreter's house, men may try to quench it, but a hidden hand pours in secretly the food of the fuel. More difficult is the meaning of the white stone, graven with the new name. Some see in it an allusion to the Urim and Thummim; and therefore take it to indicate the "priestly dignity of the victorious Christian." In favour of this, it may be noted that it gives unity to the blessing. Manna and the precious stones worn by the high-priest aré both wilderness and Jewish illustrations. Against it, however, must be set the fact that the word here rendered "stone" is never so applied, a different word being used both in the LXX. and in this book to denote a precious stone. Another suggestion, which is, perhaps, less encumbered with difficulty, is that the reference is to the stone or pebble of friendship called *tessera hospitalis*, graven with some legend or device; and which gave to its possessor a claim of hospitality from him who gave it. Some such tickets admitted those invited into the heathen temples on festival days, when the meat which had been offered as a sacrifice formed part of the feast. The stone is called *white;* but the word does not imply that it is a stone of white colour, but that it is shining, glistering white. On the stone is graven a new name. The giving of new names is not uncommon in the Bible: for example, Abraham, Israel, Boanerges, Peter. The

saving he that receiveth *it*.

Chap. ii. 18–29. The Epistle to the Church in Thyatira.

(18) And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire,

new name expressed the step which had been taken into a higher, truer life, and the change of heart and the elevation of character consequent upon it. Such are known in the world by their daily life, their business, their character; they are known above by the place they hold, and the work (the real character of which is quite unknown to the world) they are doing in the great war against evil. No man knoweth the characteristics of the growth of the character, the spiritual conflict in which the work is done, and the features of that change which has been, and is still being wrought, except he who experiences the love, the grace, and the tribulation by which his spirit-life has grown.

(18) **Thyatira** was situated between Pergamos and Sardis, a little off the main road which connected these two cities. It was a Macedonian colony, founded by Alexander the Great after the overthrow of the Persian empire. The Macedonian colonists appear to have introduced the worship of Apollo, honoured as the Sun-god, under the name of Tyrimnas. It has been thought by some that the description here given of Christ—"the eyes of flame"—was selected in allusion to this worship of the Sun-god, under the form of some dazzlingly-ornamented image. Certainly close commercial intercourse connected the daughter-colony with its mother-city. There seem to have been various mercantile guilds in the colony—bakers, potters, tanners, weavers, and dyers. The dye-trade was, perhaps, the most important. Lydia, the seller of purple, was in all likelihood connected with the guild of dyers; and her appearance in Philippi is an illustration of the trade relations of Macedonia and Thyatira. To her the Christian community at Thyatira may have owed its beginning. "She who had gone forth for a while, to buy and sell, and get gain, when she returned home may have brought home with her richer merchandise than any she had looked to obtain" (Trench). The population was of a mixed character, and included, besides Asiatics, Macedonians, Italians, and Chaldeans. The message which is sent to the Christians dwelling among them is from "*the Son of God*." This is noteworthy, when we remember how persistently the other term, "*Son of Man*," is used throughout the Book of Revelation, and that here only is the phrase "Son of God" used; but it well suits, as indeed does the whole description, the message which breathes the language of sovereignty and righteous sternness. The "eyes of flame" will search the reins and the hearts (verse 23); the "feet of fine brass" will tread down the enemies, and smooth the path before them, who will have power over the nations.

and his feet *are* like fine brass; (19) I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,[a] which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. (21) And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and

[a] 1 K. 16. 31; Rom. 2. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

(19) **Thy works, and charity.**—In the words of commendation we find two pairs. We have the Christian community commended for charity and service, the outward ministrations which manifest the inner principle of love; their *labour* of love, or their work and *love* (Heb. vi. 10) in general. In the second pair, faith and patience; the patience is the token of the faith (Rom. ii. 7; Heb. xi. 27).

And the last . . .—Read, *and thy last works more than the first.* Besides their faith and love, they are commended for their progress in good works—the last are more than the first.

(20) **A few things.**—The Sinaitic MS. has, "I have much against thee;" but the reading, *I have against thee that thou lettest alone*, &c., is to be preferred.

Jezebel.—Some adopt the reading, "thy wife, Jezebel." From these words it has been thought that there was some personal influence at work for evil in Thyatira. Whether in the household of the "angel" or not is at least doubtful. The sin alleged against her is the same for which the Nicolaitanes are condemned — fornication, and the eating of things sacrificed to idols. If the above view be right, the leader of the exorcists is a woman—regarded by her followers as a prophetess, as one with a real message from God; but viewed by the Lord of the Churches as a very Jezebel, teaching and seducing the servants of God. For letting her alone, for being timid, paying too much deference to her spiritual pretensions, for failing to see and to show that the so-called "deep things" of these teachers were depths of Satan, the chief minister is rebuked. A large number of respectable critics regard Jezebel as a name applied to a faction, not as belonging to an individual. It seems best to view the name as symbolical, always remembering that the Jezebel spirit of proud, self-constituted authority, vaunting claims of superior holiness, or higher knowledge, linked with a disregard of—and perhaps a proud contempt for—"legalism," and followed by open immorality, has again and again run riot in the churches of God.

(21) **And I gave her space.**—Read, *And I gave her time to repent, and she will not* (or, *is not willing to*) *repent of her fornication*, or, *to repent out of*—*i.e.*, so as to forsake her fornication. Here, as before, we are reminded that true repentance is a repentance whereby

she repented not. (22) Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. (23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: [a] and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (24) But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. (25) But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. (26) And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (27) and he shall rule them

[a] Jer. 11. 20, and 17. 10.

---

we forsake sin. (Comp. chaps. ii. 5 and iii. 2.)

(22) **I will cast her into a bed.**—The chamber of voluptuousness will become the chamber of sickness. The spot of the sin shall be the scene of punishment. (Comp. 1 Kings xxi. 19.)

(23) **Her children.**—This is to be understood of her followers. The so-called prophetess led the way in looseness of morals, under the pretence of some deeper knowledge. She had her associates and their disciples; the evil and the evil consequences would grow; the disciples outrun their teachers, and more than tribulation—death—is their penalty.

(24) **But unto you I say** (omit "and unto") **the rest,** &c.

The depths. — Or, *the deep things.* These teachers, as was the case with the Gnostics, professed to have a deeper insight into mysteries, the deep things of God. They may have garnished their speech with this very phrase, borrowed—in sound though not in sense—from 1 Cor. ii. 10, and may have even boasted of their knowledge of Satan. But such knowledge was purchased too dearly. Better off were they who were simple concerning evil; they have a burden, but it is not the burden of judicial tribulation: it is the burden only of resisting the evils of those troublers of the Church. The allusion may be to the decree of Acts xv. 28; the same word for "burden" is used. They must not abandon their duty of witnessing for purity, and so for Christ; this burden they must take up, and hold fast till He come.

(26, 27) **Power** (or, *authority*) **over the nations: and he shall rule them** (or *shepherd them*) **with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.**—The promise is of authority ("the might of right, not the right of might") to share in the shepherd-like sovereignty of the anointed King. (Comp. the Messianic prophecy of Ps. ii.) Those who refused to stoop to the customs around them, and to gain influence by crushing

with a rod of iron;[a] as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my father. (28) And I will give him the morning star. (29) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

A.D. 96.

[a] ch. 22. 16; Num. 24. 17; Ps. 2. 9; Mic. 4. 13; 2 Luke 1. 78.

CHAPTER III.—(1) And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that

(Chap. iii. 1—6. The Epistle to the Church in Sardis.)

---

or ignoring their convictions—those who, like their Master, refused to win power by doing homage to wrong (Matt. iv. 8—10), would share the nobler sway which He now established. Wherever the Church has illegitimately grasped at power, she has lost it. "The wretched power which she had wrenched and stolen from the nations has been turned against her; she has been obliged to crouch to them, and beg their help, and they have justly spurned her. She has chosen to exalt herself like Lucifer, and she has fallen like Lucifer. If she had trusted her Lord, He would have given her the morning star. She would have derived from Him what she claimed independently of Him. She would have dispensed light to the world."

(28) **The morning star.**—The pledge of the coming day, both for the waiting witnesses, and for the ungodly, who loved darkness because their deeds were evil: the earnest of the sovereignty of light over darkness, when the children of the day would be manifest, and shine as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. xii. 3).

III.

(1) **Sardis.**—The modern *Sart*—now a mere village of paltry huts—once the capital of the old Lydian monarchy, and associated with the names of Crœsus, Cyrus, and Alexander. It was the great *entrepôt* of dyed woollen fabrics, the sheep of "many-flocked" Phrygia supplying the raw material. The art of dyeing is said to have been invented here; and many-coloured carpets or mats found in the houses of the wealthy were manufactured here. The metal known as electrum, a kind of bronze, was the produce of Sardis; and in early times gold-dust was found in the sand of the Pactolus, the little stream which passed through the Agora of Sardis, and washed the walls of the Temple of Cybele. It is said that gold and silver coins were first minted at Sardis, and that resident merchants first became a class there. An earthquake laid it waste in the reign of Tiberius; a pestilence followed, but the city seems to have recovered its prosperity before the date of this epistle. The worship of Cybele was the prevailing one; its rites, like those of Dionysos and Aphrodite, encouraged impurity.

The writer is described in words similar to those in chap. i. 4, as the one who hath the seven spirits

thou livest, and art dead. (2) Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works per-

of God, and the seven stars; but there is a difference. There Christ was seen holding the stars in His right hand; here it is said He *hath* the seven Spirits and also the seven stars. In this language it is difficult to overlook the unhesitating way in which Christ is spoken of as owning or possessing that Holy Spirit who alone can make angels of His Church to shine as stars. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii. 9, 11). His promise is, "I will send the Comforter unto you" (John xv. 26), as possessing all power in heaven and earth. "He is able," to use the language of Professor Plumptre, "to bring together the gifts of life, and the ministry for which those gifts are needed. If those who minister are without gifts, it is because they have not asked for them." This the angel of the Sardian Church had not done; his faith and the faith of the Church around him had sunk into a superficial, though perhaps ostentatious, state. Here, then, lies the appropriateness of the description given of Christ, as the source of life and light to His Church.

A name that thou livest.—It is only needful to mention, and to dismiss the fanciful conjecture, that the name of the angel was Zosimos, or some parallel name, signifying life-bearing or living. It is the reputation for piety possessed by the Church of Sardis which is referred to. Living with the credit of superior piety, it was easy to grow satisfied with the reputation, and to forget to keep open the channels through which grace and life could flow, and to fail to realise that the adoption of habits of life higher than those around them, or those who lived before them, was no guarantee of real spiritual life; for "the real virtues of one age become the spurious ones of the next . . . The belief of the Pharisees, the religious practice of the Pharisees, was an improvement upon the life of the sensual and idolatrous Jews whom the prophets denounced. But those who used both the doctrinal and moral improvements as the fulcrum of a selfish power and earthly rank, were the same men after all as their fathers, only accommodated to a new age" (Mozley). Self-satisfaction, which springs up when a certain reputation has been acquired, is the very road to self-deception. The remedy is progress—forgetting the things behind, lest looking with complacency upon the past, moral and spiritual stagnation should set in, and spiritual death should follow.

(2) **Be watchful.**—Rather, *become wakeful.* It will not do simply to rouse and sleepily grasp at their spiritual weapons, or even to stand for once at arms; you must become of wakeful habit. Strengthen the remaining things which were (when I roused you) about to die; for I have not found thy (or, *any of thy*) works perfect—completed or fulfilled, fully done in weight and tale and measure — before *my* God.

fect before God. (3) Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch,[a] I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (4) Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. (5) He that overcometh,

[a] 1 Thess. 5. 2; 2. Pet. 3. 10.

(3) **Remember therefore how** (or, *after what sort*) **thou hast received and heard** (or, *didst hear*—the tense changes).—Remembering that the words are addressed primarily to the angel himself, the change of tense may have been designed to point him back to some particular period of his life, such as the time when he was set apart to his ministerial work. The further expectation is to hold fast, or keep—*i.e.*, as an abiding habit. It has been noticed that this counsel is identical with that given to Timothy to "keep the good thing which had been committed to his charge" (2 Tim. i. 14; comp. also 2 Tim. ii. 2). "Repent" is the closing word; combined with the exhortation to hold fast, it reminds us that formal tenacity of truth and a fruitless inactive regret are alike useless. There must be the sorrow for the past, and a sorrow which shows itself in action — a repentance whereby sin is forsaken. (Comp. chap. ii. 5, 21.)

If therefore thou shalt not watch.—Better, *If thou shalt not watch* (or, *have been awake*), *I will come* (omit "on thee") *as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* The warning is an echo from the Gospels (Matt. xxiv. 42, 43; Luke xii. 39, 40). The coming of Christ to judge His Church would be in an hour unlooked for. What kind of hour he would so come was unknown, the sound of His approaching footsteps unheard. Shod with wool, according to the ancient proverb, stealthily as a thief, the Judge would be at the door. Yet they could not plead that they had been in darkness (1 Thess. v. 4).

(4) The best MSS. commence this verse with "But," or "Nevertheless." The case of the Sardian Church was bad, yet the loving eyes of the faithful witness would not ignore the good. There were a few who had not defiled their garments. These had not succumbed to the oppressive moral atmosphere around them. The words cannot, of course, be understood of absolute purity. Their praise is that, in the death-like, self-complacent lethargy around, they had kept earnest in the pursuit of holiness, and had not forgotten Him who could cleanse and revive. (Comp. chap. vii. 14.)

They shall walk with me in white.—This "white" is not the white of the undefiled robe; it is the lustrous white of glory, as in the promise in the following verse. (Comp. also chap. ii. 17.)

(5) **He that overcometh.**—The promise is repeated to all who

the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life,[a] but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (6) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These

[a] ch. 13. 8; 20. 12; 21. 27; Phil. 4. 3.

Chap. iii. 7—13. The Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia.

---

overcome; all, not who have never fallen, or failed, but who conquer, shall be clothed in glistening white raiment. On this glistering appearance comp. Dante's words, "robed in hue of living flame," and the description so frequent in the *Pilgrim's Progress*—"the shining ones." Trench, who reminds us that this glistening white is found in the symbolism of heathen antiquity, says: "The glorified body, defecated of all its dregs and impurities, whatever remained of those having been *precipitated* in death, and now transformed and transfigured into the likeness of Christ's body (Phil. iii. 31), this, with its robe, atmosphere, effluence of light, is itself, I believe, the white raiment which Christ here promises to His redeemed." Professor Lightfoot thinks (see his *Epistle to Col.*, p. 22) that there may be a reference to the purple dyes for which Sardis, as well as Thyatira, was celebrated.

I will not blot out . . .—The negative is emphatic, "I will in no wise blot out." This figure of speech—a book and the blotting out—was ancient. (See Deut. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxix. 21; Dan. xii. 1; comp. also Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3.) The name shall not be erased from the roll or register of the citizens of heaven. "A process of erasure is ever going on, besides the process of entering. When the soul has finally taken its choice for evil, when Christ is utterly denied on earth and trodden under foot, when the defilement of sin has become inveterate and indelible, then the pen is drawn through the guilty name, then the inverted style smears the wax over the unworthy characters; and when the owner of that name applies afterwards for admittance, the answer is, 'I know thee not; depart hence, thou willing worker and lover of iniquity'" (Dr. Vaughan).

But I will confess his name.—Another echo of Christ's words on earth (Matt. x. 32, 33; Luke xii. 8, 9).

(7) **Philadelphia.**—The town of Philadelphia derived its name from Attalus Philadelphus, the king of Pergamos, who died B.C. 138. It was situated on the slopes of Mount Tmolus, in the midst of a district the soil of which was favourable to the cultivation of the vine. On the coins of the town are to be found the head of Bacchus. The town was built on high ground—upwards of 900 feet above the sea-level. The whole region, however, was volcanic, and few cities suffered more from earthquakes; the frequent recurrence of these considerably reduced the population. But its favourable

things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David,	he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

situation and fertile soil preserved it from entire desertion. And of all the seven churches, it had the longest life as a Christian city. "Philadelphia alone has been saved . . . ; among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, a column in a scene of ruins." Such is the language of Gibbon referring to its later history. As a light in the world at the present day, we must look to no Eastern Philadelphia; the hand of William Penn kindled a light in its great namesake of the West.

These things saith he that is holy . . .—Better, *These things saith the Holy, the True, He that hath the key of David, that openeth, and no man shall shut, and He shutteth, and no one shall open.*

Holy.—The main idea of the word here used is that of consecration. It is used of what is set apart to God; it does not assert the possession of personal holiness, but it implies it as a duty. It becomes, therefore, pre-eminently appropriate to Him who was not only consecrate, but holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Prof. Plumptre thinks there may be a reference here to the confession made by St. Peter (John vi. 69), where the right reading is, "Thou art the Christ, the *holy One* of God."

True.—A favourite word with St. John, and expressing more than the opposite of "false." It implies that which is perfect in contrast with the imperfect; the reality in contrast with the shadow; the antitype in contrast with the type; the ideal which is the only real in contrast with the real which is only ideal;—

> "The flower upon the spiritual side,
> Substantial, archetypal, all aglow
> With blossoming causes"

in contrast with the flower that fadeth here. Christ, then, in calling Himself the True, declares that "all titles and names given to Him are realised in Him; the idea and the fact in Him are, what they can never be in any other, absolutely commensurate" (Trench). In some MSS. the order of these words, "the Holy," "the True," is inverted.

The key of David.—Some early commentators saw in this key the key of knowledge which the scribes had taken away (Luke xi. 52), and understood this expression here as implying that Christ alone could unloose the seals of Scripture, and reveal its hidden truth to men. In support of this they referred to chap. v. 7—9. The fault of the interpretation is that it is too limited; it is only a corner of the full meaning. He who is "the True" alone can unlock the hidden treasures of truth. But the use of the word "David," and the obvious derivation of the latter part of this verse from Isa. xxii. 22, points to a wider meaning. Jesus Christ is the true steward of the house of David. (Comp. Heb. iii. 2, 5, 6.) The faulty, self-seeking stewards, the Shebnas of Jerusalem and Philadelphia, vainly claimed a right of exclusion from synagogue or church, where Jesus, the God-

(8) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. (9) Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make

fixed nail in the sure place, upon which the bundle of earth's sorrows and sins might securely be suspended (Isa. xxii. 23—25), the Eliakim of a greater Zion, had the key of the sacred and royal house. In this, the chamber of truth was one treasure, as the chamber of holiness, the chamber of rest, the chamber of spiritual privileges, were others. In other words, though in a sense the keys of spiritual advantages are in the hands of His servants, "He still retains the highest administration of them in His own hands." The power of the keys entrusted to Apostles gave them no right to alter the "essentials of the gospel, or the fundamental principles of morality." The absolution given by them can only be conditional, unless the giver of it possesses the infallible discerning of spirits. The reader of Dante will remember how the cases of Guido di Montefeltro (*Inf.* xxvii.) and of his son Buonconte (*Purg.* v.) illustrate the belief which sustained so many illustrious spirits (John Huss, Savanarola, Dante), and in times of unjust oppression, tyrannical ecclesiasticism, and which this passage sanctions, that

> "Nought but repentance ever can absolve;
> And that though sins be horrible; yet so wide arms
> Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
> All who turn to it."

(8) **I know thy works: behold, I have set** (better, *given*) **before thee an open door** (better, *a door opened*).—A reference to the passages (Acts xiv. 27; 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13; Col. iv. 3) in which a similar expression is used reminds us that the open door was not simply a way of escape from difficulties, but an opening for preaching the gospel, an opportunity of doing good, as well as an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.—The tenses used point back to some epoch in the history of this Church when some heavy trial or persecution arose, which tested the sincerity, fidelity, or Christian love of the faithful. "The reward then of a little strength is a door opened" (Dr. Vaughan).

(9) **Behold, I will make.**—Better, *Behold, I give some.* There is no word to express this in the original, but as a word must be supplied to complete the sense, it is better to adopt "some" than the "them" of the Authorised version, as it is not a promise that all of the synagogue of Satan should come.

Of the synagogue of Satan.—We have here a re-appearance of the same troubles which afflicted the Church of Smyrna: the fixed and contemptuous exclusiveness of

them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (10) Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. (11) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. (12) Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and

---

the Judaising party was their trial. But there was a time coming (perhaps the hour of temptation spoken of in the next verse) when these faithful ones, now abused and excommunicated by the fanatical synagogue, would be courted, acknowledged—nay, their aid invoked.

I will make them to come and worship before my feet, and to know that I have loved thee.—Some see in this a hint that the power of a large-hearted party to protect the Judaisers would be derived from the influence of the Gentiles, whose presence in the Church had been a stumbling-block to the Jewish party. This may have been, and doubtless was, often the case. But the promise seems to have a higher fulfilment. The course of events would show that the so-called latitudinarian was the nearest to Christ; time would transform the suspected into the respected. The Amorites would come, and the disinherited Jephthahs would be brought to the head of Gilead. In days of such trouble their strongest opponents would become their warmest supporters. An illustration of this will occur to the mind of the reader in the marvellous support which has been given to the growth of Christianity by Jews with the tongue, with the pen, with the harp and organ. Let the names of Neander, Rossini, and Mendelssohn stand for hundreds more.

(10) **Because thou hast kept** (better, *didst keep*) **the word of my patience.**—The one who keeps God's word is kept. Such is "the benign *à talis* of the kingdom of God," as Archbishop Trench calls it. The promise does not mean the being kept away from, but the being kept out from the tribulation. The head should be kept above the waters; they should not be ashamed, because they had kept the word of patience. It is through *patience*, as well as comfort of the Scripture that we have the hope which maketh not ashamed. (Comp. Rom. xv. 5, and verses 3—5.)

(11) **Behold, I come.** — Omit "Behold." Better, *I am coming quickly; hold fast; continue your race as those who are striving for a garland* (1 Cor. ix. 24).

(12) **Will I make a pillar.**—A pillar, and an unshaken one. There may be reference to the frequent earthquakes which had shaken down buildings in their city. Those who overcome will prove real supports to the great Christian temple. (Comp. Gal. ii. 9.)

I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I *will write upon him* my new name. (13) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (14) And unto the angel of the church of

Write upon him.—Or, *grave upon it.* On the sides of the four marble pillars which survive as ruins of Philadelphia inscriptions are to be found. The writing would be the name of God, the name of the heavenly Jerusalem and (omit the repetition, "I will write upon him") the new, unknown name of Christ Himself. The allusion is to the golden frontlet inscribed with the name of Jehovah. (Comp. chap. xxii. 4.) He will reflect the likeness of God; and not only so, he will bear the tokens—now seen in all clearness—of his heavenly citizenship (Phil. iii. 20; Heb. xii. 22, 23). And a further promise implies that in the day of the last triumph, as there will be new revealings of Christ's power, there will be unfolded to the faithful and victorious new and higher possibilities of purity. Thus does Scripture refuse to recognise any finality which is not a beginning as well as an end—a landing-stage in the great law of continuity. (See chaps. ii. 17, and xix. 12.)

(14) **Laodicea.**—Situated halfway between Philadelphia and Colossæ, and not far from Hierapolis. It received its name from Laodice, wife of Antiochus, the second king of Syria, by whom it was rebuilt and beautified. It had borne in earlier times the names of Diospolis and afterwards Rhoas. It shared with Thyatira and Sardis in the dye trade; the woods grown in the neighbourhood were famous for their quality and the rich blackness of their colour. Prosperity in trade had so enriched the population that when their city suffered in the great earthquake (A.D. 60) they were able to carry on the work of rebuilding without applying, as many of the neighbouring towns were compelled to do, to the Imperial Treasury for aid. The language of St. Paul (Col. i. 5—8) suggests that the churches of Colossæ and the neighbourhood first received Christianity from the preaching of Epaphras, though it seems strange that so important a city, lying hard upon the great Roman road from Ephesus to the east, should have been passed over by St. Paul in his journeyings throughout Phrygia (see Acts xvi. 6 and xviii. 23); yet, on the other hand, Phrygia was a vague term, and the language of Col. ii. 1 is most generally understood to imply that the Apostle had never personally visited either Colossæ or Laodicea. (See note on Col. ii. 1.) But it was a Church in which St. Paul took the deepest possible interest; the believers there were constantly in his mind. He knew their special temptations to the worship of inferior mediators, and to spiritual paralysis springing from worldly prosperity and intellectual pride. He had great heart-conflict for those of Laodicea (Col. iii. 1), and in proof of his earnest

the Laodiceans[1] write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

[1] Or, *in Laodicea*

Chap. iii. 14—22. The Epistle to the Laodiceans.

solicitude he addressed a letter to them (Col. iv. 61), in all probability the epistle we call the Epistle to the Ephesians. From the Epistle to the Colossians we may gather that when St. Paul wrote the Christians at Laodicea assembled for worship in the house of Nymphas (Col. iv. 15), probably under the presidency of Archippus (verse 17).

Unto the angel of the church (or, *congregation*) **of the Laodiceans.** — Better, *in Laodicea*. By the angel we understand the presiding pastor. There is some ground for identifying him with Archippus. It is too much to dismiss this as a baseless supposition. (See Note in Trench.) It is a well-supported view which understands the passage (Col. iv. 17) to mean that Archippus was a minister or office-bearer in the church at Laodicea.

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness. — The "Amen" used only here as a personal name. It is the Hebrew word for verily, and may have some reference to Isa. lxv. 16; but more certainly it seems chosen to recall the frequent use of it by our Lord Himself. He who so often prefaced His solemn utterance by "Verily, verily," now reveals Himself as the source of all certainty and truth. In Him is Yea and in Him Amen (2 Cor. i. 20). In Him there is no conjecture or guesswork; for He is (and the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew Amen are used following) the faithful and true witness who speaks what He *knows*, and testifies what He has *seen* (John iii. 11). "Faithful" is to be taken here as meaning trustworthy. The word sometimes means trustful (John xx. 27; Acts xiv. 1), at other times, trustworthy (2 Tim. ii. 22; 1 Thess. v. 24). In the Arian controversy, the application of the word to Christ was used as an argument against His divinity; it was enough to show in reply that the same word was applied to God, and expressed His faithfulness to His word and promise (1 Thess. v. 24). "True"—He is not only trustworthy as a witness, but He combines in Himself all those qualifications which a witness ought to possess. The same word is used here as in verse 7, where see Note. Trench suggests the three things necessary to constitute a true witness. He must have been an eyewitness of what He relates, possess competence to relate what He has seen, and be willing to do so.

The beginning (better, *the origination*) **of the creation of God.**—This title of our Lord does not occur in the Epistles to the other churches, but very closely resembles the language used by St. Paul in writing to the Colossians (chap. i. 15—18). The "beginning," not meaning that Christ was the first among the created, but that He was the origination, or *primary source* of all creation. By Him were all things made (John i. 1—3; comp. Col. i.

(15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. (17) Because thou

15, 18), not *with* Him but *by* Him creation began. In short, the word "beginning" (like the word "faithful") must be understood in an active sense. He has originating power (Acts iii. 14) as well as priority of existence. The appropriateness of its use will be seen when we remember that the Laodicean Church was exposed to the temptation of worshipping inferior principalities. (See Col. i. 16; ii. 15, where the plural of the word here rendered "beginning," or *origin*, is used, and is translated "principalities.")

(15, 16) **Neither cold nor hot.**—The "heat" here is the glowing, fervent zeal and devotion which is commended and commanded elsewhere (Rom. xii. 11). It is not, however, the self-conscious, galvanised earnestness which, in days of senile pietism, passes for zeal. It is an earnestness which does not know itself earnest, being all too absorbed in its work. It is self-forgetful, and so self-sacrificing, rather than ambitious of self-sacrifice. It is, in short, kindled of God, and sustained by converse with the Divine One (Luke xxiv. 32), and restored by intercourse with Him (see verse 20; comp. 1 John iv. 15—20). The "cold" describes the state of those who are as yet untouched by the Gospel of Love. An intermediate state between these is the "lukewarm"; such are neither earnest for God nor utterly indifferent to religion. They are, perhaps, best described as those who take an interest in religion, but whose worship of their idol of good taste, or good form, leads them to regard enthusiasm as ill-bred, and disturbing; and who have never put themselves to any inconvenience, braved any reproach, or abandoned any comfort for Christ's sake, but hoped to keep well with the world, while they flattered themselves that they stood well with God; who were in danger of betraying their Master, Judas-like, with a kiss. With the denunciation of "lukewarmness" here we may compare the exhortation to greater ministerial earnestness addressed to Archippus (Col. iv. 17).

I would . . .—The wish is not that they might grow cold rather than remain in this lukewarm state, it is more a regret that they are among those who are in a condition which is so liable to self-deception; such a state is "both to God displeasing and to His foes." And this is expressed in startling language, "I *am about* (such is the force of the words) to spue thee . . . ."

(17) **I am rich.**—The verse means more literally, *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have grown rich, and in nothing have need, and knowest not that thou art the wretched* (such is the emphasis) *one, and the pitiable one, and beggarly, and blind, and naked.* Thou art "the type, the embodiment of wretchedness." The words should,

sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine

I think, be taken, as an amplification of the reason for their rejection. Christ was about to reject them for being in that tepid state which, beginning with self-satisfaction, led on to self-deception. They were rich in worldly goods (unlike the Church in Smyrna), but their very wealth led them into a quiet unaggressive kind of religion; they were proud also of their intellectual wealth; self-complacent because in comfortable worldly circumstances, and became puffed up with a vain philosophy, they learned to be satisfied with their spiritual state, and to believe the best of themselves, and then to believe in themselves. Hypocrites they were, who did not know they were hypocrites. They thought themselves good; and this self-deception was their danger. "For," to use Prof. Mozley's words, "why should a man repent of his goodness? He may well repent, indeed, of his falsehood; but unhappily the falsehood of it is just the thing he does not see, and which he cannot see by the very law of his character. The Pharisee did not know he *was* a Pharisee. If he had known it, he would not have been a Pharisee. The victim of passion, then, may be converted—the gay, the thoughtless, or the ambitious; he whom human glory has intoxicated; he whom the show of life has ensnared; he whom the pleasures of sense have captivated—they may be converted, any one of these; but who is to convert the hypocrite? He does not know he is a hypocrite; he cannot, upon the very basis of his character; he must think himself sincere; and the more he is in the shackles of his own character, *i.e.*, the greater hypocrite he is, the more sincere he must think himself" (*University Sermons*, p. 34).

(18) **I counsel thee to buy.**—There is, perhaps, a touch of irony here. How could the poor and naked buy? But the irony has no sting, for the counsel but recalled the invitation of the prophet to buy "without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1).

Gold—*i.e.*, golden coin, "tried," or, *fired out of fire*, and so free from alloy or dross. Trench suggests that "gold" here stands for *faith*. Does not, however, the self-deceiving state of this Church rather point to love as the missing grace? The Laodiceans were as those who had many graces in appearance; they were not unlike one who had gifts, tongues, understanding, liberality, but lacked that fervent love without which all was as nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 1—3); or to use Trench's own image, they were lacking in the only grace accepted as currency in the kingdom of God.

eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: [a] be zealous therefore, and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (21) To him that overcometh

[a] Prov. 3. 11; Heb. 12. 5.

"O merchantman at heaven's mart for heavenly ware,
Love is the only coin which passes there."

But the possession of this love would bring their zeal out of the tepid into the fervent state. Such love, pure and fervent, could only spring from God who would shed abroad His love in their hearts (Rom. v. 5).

White raiment.—The putting on of apparel and the stripping of it off were tokens of honour and humiliation. (See 2 Sam. x. 1; Isa. lxvii. 2, 3, 9; Hos. ii. 3, 9; Zech. iii. 3—5; Rev. xvi. 15; Luke xv. 22.) The wedding-feast was at hand. The unclad would then be put to shame (Matt. xxii. 11—13). Let them be prepared against this by putting on Christ (Col. iii. 10—14) and His righteousness (Phil. iii. 9) that the shame of their nakedness do not appear—or, much better, *be not made manifest.*

Eyesalve.—They were blind; they were proud of their intellectual wealth; they boasted of their enlightenment. (Comp. Col. ii. 8.) Self-deceived, they thought like the Pharisees that they saw. (Comp. John ix. 40, 41.) Better would it be for them that they should receive the anointing of the Holy One (1 John. ii. 20), which would teach them all things, and especially reveal to them their self-ignorance. This anointing might be painful, but "the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened" (such is the remarkably parallel thought in the Epistle to the Ephesians), and they would be enabled to see and appreciate things spiritual. (Comp. John ix. 7, 25; 1 Cor. ii. 10—14; Eph. i. 18; v. 19).

(19) **I rebuke and chasten.**—The first word is that used in the work of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 8), and signifies to bring conviction; it is not empty censure. The second word signifies to educate by means of correction. The pronoun is emphatic, "I," and calls attention to the fidelity of Christ's love in comparison with the weak partiality seen in human love. (Comp. Heb. xii. 6.)

Be zealous.—Or, be in a constant zealous state; and now, once for all, repent.

(20) **Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.**—It is difficult not to see an allusion in this image to Cant. v. 2—6. Perhaps, also, the memory of the first night spent by St. John with his Master and Friend (John i. 39) may have been strong in his mind. Indeed, the life of Christ on earth teems with illustrations which may well have suggested the image (Luke x. 38; xix. 5, 6; xxii. 11—13; xxiv. 29, 30).

(21) **To him that overcometh . . . .**—He will share Christ's throne as Christ shared His Father's

will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne. (22) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER IV.— (1) After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talk-

Chap. iv. 1—11. The vision of the throne of God in heaven.

---

throne. Here are two thrones mentioned. My throne, saith Christ: this is the condition of glorified saints who sit with Christ in His throne. "But my Father's (*i.e.*, God's) throne is the power of divine majesty." Herein none may sit but God, and the God-man Jesus Christ. The promise of sharing the throne is the climax of an ascending series of glorious promises, which carry the thought from the Garden of Eden (chap. ii. 7) through the wilderness (chap. ii. 17), the temple (chap. iii. 12), to the throne. The promise bears marked resemblance to the language of St. Paul to the Ephesians (chap. ii. 6). This crowning promise is made to the most unpleasing of the churches. But it is well that thus the despondency which often succeeds the sudden collapse of self-satisfied imaginations should be met by so bright a prospect. Though their religion has been proved an empty thing, there is a hope which may well drive away despair. "The highest place is within the reach of the lowest; the faintest spark of grace may be fanned into the mightiest flame of divine love."

IV.

In this chapter we pass from the sufferings and temptations of the churches below to the unsullied glory above. The vision of the Almighty here described is thought to be interposed here to remind us that all decrees respecting the future "rest with God, and come from Him through Jesus Christ." This is no doubt true; but there is another reason. From the world below, and the struggling churches, we are brought to see the Eternal who is ruling over all. A vision like this must dwarf our sense of life's sorrows and temptations, and is a fit preparation for the scenes of conflict, failure, and persecution, which are about to be unfolded. Whatever painful sights the seer is called upon to behold, this vision of Him who rules "over all from the beginning" will remain in the background as the constant witness that in all the changes and chances of this mortal life, in all the vicissitudes of the Church's history, God is her refuge; therefore she will not be moved though the earth be removed. It is the vision of eternal strength so often vouchsafed to the sad. As to Ezekiel "among the captives by the river of Chebar" (Ezek. i. 1), and to Isaiah mourning over the gloom which was settling on Judah (Isa. vi. 1); so now to the exile in Patmos, and through him to all who, in their life-conflict, need "everlasting consolation and good hope." "You

ing with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. (2) And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne

see how distress and solitude and sorrow favour communications between a man and his God."

(1) **After this** (better, *these things*) **I looked** (literally, *I saw*; not "I looked," as though the prophet turned his gaze then towards it), **and, behold a door was opened** (or, *set open*) **in heaven.**—He did not look and see a door opening; he saw, and lo! the door stood open. There are differences as well as similarities between this vision and others where glimpses into heaven were given to prophets and saints. In Ezekiel's vision, and in the scene of Matt. iii. 16 (comp. also Acts vii. 56, and x. 11), the heavens divide; in this a door stands open. The way into the presence of God lies open (Heb. x. 19, 20); all who have faith may enter; in the minds of such the thoughts of the heavenly will mingle with the sorrows of the earthly, and the calm of security will be theirs (Ps. xlvi. 5). But the scenes of earth's troubles will always be dispiriting to those who cannot reach the heavenly viewpoint.

And the first voice (or, *behold, the first voice*) **which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me;** (even one) **which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee** (the) **things which must be hereafter.**—The *first* voice here spoken of is the voice which the Apostle had heard in the opening vision (chap. i. 10); he heard and recognised that trumpet-like voice again. It is strange that any should have maintained that this is not the voice of Christ. It is admitted that it must be the same as the voice of chap. i. 10; but it is said that the voice of Christ is heard afterwards (chap. i. 15), not as a trumpet, but as the voice of many waters. The answer is simple; the voice of Christ has many tones; and the voice like a trumpet said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." (See chap. i. 10—13.)

(2) **And immediately I was in the spirit.**—Comp. chap. i. 10. The mind and soul were absorbed in the vision of things celestial. (See 2 Cor. xii. 1—4.)

> "Words may not tell of that transhuman change;
>
> If I were only what Thou didst create,
> Then newly, Love! by whom the heaven is ruled,
> Thou know'st, who by Thy light didst bear me up."
>
> —*Paradiso*, i. 68—73.

And, behold, a throne was set (*i.e.*, not that the seer saw the throne being set, but when he saw it was already set) **in heaven, and one sat on the throne.**—Comp. Micaiah's speech (1 Kings xxii. 19). The enthroned One is not named. Have we here a touch of the Jewish reluctance to name Jehovah? or is it that the descriptive phrase, "He that sat on the throne" is used here, and kept before us in the whole book to remind us that the great world-drama moves forward ever under the eyes of the ruling One? (Comp.

was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. (3) And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. (4) And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting,

chaps. v. 1, 7; vi. 15; xx. 11; xxi. 5.)

(3) **And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.**—In determining the significance of these emblems we must be guided partly by the analogy of Bible imagery elsewhere, and partly by our knowledge of precious stones. The sardian, or sardine, is admitted to be a stone of fiery red colour; the emerald, to which the bow round the throne is compared, is almost certainly a bright green; the hue of the jasper is the difficulty. The jasper—the last stone in the high-priest's breastplate, and first of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Ex. xxviii. 20, and Rev. xxi. 19)—is described by the best authorities as a dark, opaque green. Such a colour is quite in harmony with the colours of the other stones in the breastplate, and particularly with the foundation stones, which seem to be arranged in shades of colour (see Notes on chap. xxi. 19 *et seq.*); but the dark opaque green would be an ill combination with the red sardius and the green emerald in the vision of the present chapter. Is there no further light? We have a jasper stone spoken of in chap. xxi. 11, 18, with the descriptive phrase, "clear as crystal!" Does not this point to a stone somewhat different in appearance from that spoken of simply as jasper? Such a clear crystal stone would be the most natural companion to the sardine, and the combination of the sparkling brightness and fiery red suits the union of brightness and flame which appears elsewhere in the Bible (comp. chaps. i. 14; xi. 1; Ezek. i. 4; viii. 2; Dan. vii. 9), and is best understood of the holiness and righteousness of God. The latter half of this verse shows us these surrounded by the emerald-coloured bow, the evident symbol of the divine mercy. The allusion to the bow in the cloud (Gen. ix. 12—16) is obvious; the bow completely encircled the throne, as mercy encompassing judgment. It was a covenant token, bearing witness to God's faithfulness in dark times, God's care for the ark of His Church, and His mercy shining forth after storm.

(4) **And round about the throne were four and twenty seats** (or, *thrones*), **and upon the seats** (or, *thrones*) **I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.**—Perhaps the wish to give its due pre-eminence to the thought of Him who sat on the throne caused our translators to describe the elders as sitting on seats; but the same word *throne* is used of both, and those who are now seated on thrones are called (chap. v. 10) kings and priests. In the similar

clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. [5] And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before

vision in Ezekiel no human beings are seen; their appearance here is significant. They are the representatives of Christ's Church and people, of those whom Christ calls His friends, and who are admitted to know what their Lord doeth (John xv. 15). Various reasons have been suggested why they should be described as twenty-four in number: they are the twelve tribes doubled, to signify the union of the Gentile with the Jewish Church; they are the two sets of twelve, to represent the two Testaments; they are the twelve Patriarchs cojoined with the twelve Apostles. It will be seen that these were all different forms of the same thought, that the twenty-four elders represent the complete Church of God in the past and in the future, in the Jewish and Gentile worlds; and as such the true spiritual successors, as priests to God, of those twenty-four courses (1 Chron. xxiv. 1—19) arranged by David, and which some have thought gave rise to the use of the number twenty-four in this passage. It is the great united Church. The same thought is touched upon in the double song of Moses and the Lamb (chap. xv. 3), and in the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem (chap. xxi. 12, 14).

[5] **And out of the throne proceeded** (rather, *proceed;* there is a change in the tense used) **lightnings and thunderings and voices.**—These are viewed by some as the indications of approaching judgments. Perhaps it is better to view them as the tokens of God's power of judgment than as hints of immediately approaching judgments. The scene at Sinai (Ex. xix. 16) was no doubt in the prophet's mind. There the clouds and lightnings were not so much tokens of coming judgment as the symbols of that righteous power which can show itself in judgment. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvii. 2). They are the constant tokens of that power of God

> "Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone,
> But in the darkness and the cloud
> As over Sinai's peaks of old."

And there were seven lamps (or, *torches*) **of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.**—See chap. iii. 1. The Spirit of God in His manifold powers is thus described under emblems of fire. Not merely as a fire of judgment. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of fire (Matt. iii. 11, 12). The flaming presence purges the spirit from sin. The Holy Spirit consumes evil. It is an unquenchable fire against all evils, whether in men's hearts or in men's lives, or in the world. (Comp. 1 Cor. iii. 13, and Heb. xii. 29.) May there not be allusion to the covenant with Abraham, which was ratified by

the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. [6]And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind. [7] And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the

fire? Lamps, or torches, of fire (*lampades puros*, LXX., same as in this passage) went between the divided pieces of the heifer and the she-goat. If this be correct, the vision of this chapter reminds us that God is ever mindful of His covenant. The rainbow, the token of the covenant with Noah; the flaming torches, tokens of the covenant with Abraham; and the thunderings and lightnings, the tokens of the covenant at Sinai, are ever with Him. (Comp. also Ezek. i. 4.)

[6] **And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.**—There is a sea before the throne of God. The woman apparelled in purple splendour sits upon many waters (chap. xvii. 1). The waters are explained (chap. xvii. 15) to be "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Her throne rests on the fickle and stormy sea of world-opinion, fashion, and passion. The waters represent the unguided, unreasoning, and unprincipled thoughts of men. By analogy, the calm glass-like sea, which is never in storm, but only interfused with flame (chap. xv. 2), represents the counsels of God, those purposes of righteousness and love, often fathomless, but never obscure; always the same, though sometimes glowing with holy anger (chap. xv. 1). (Comp. the Psalmist's words, "Thy judgments are like the great deep," Ps. xxxvi. 6, Prayer Book version. See also Ps. lxxvii. 19, and Rom. xi. 33—36.) The position of the crystal sea is analogous to that of the molten sea in front of Solomon's Temple (2 Chron. iv. 9, 10).

And in the midst of the throne—*i.e.*, between the seer and the throne. The Apostle saw the crystal sea, and beyond it the living creatures encircling the throne—four living creatures (or, *living beings*) full of (or, *teeming with*) eyes before and behind.

[7] **And the first beast** (better, in each case, *living being*) **was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf** (comp. Ezek. i. 7, 10), **and the third beast had a face as a man** (or, *its countenance as of a man*), **and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.**—These are *living beings*, not "beasts," as in the Authorised version. The rendering "beasts" introduces confusion of thought, and violates the laws of Apocalyptic, indeed of Bible, imagery. The evil powers are described under the emblem of wild beasts; for thus brute force, and unrestrained passion, and self-will, &c., are symbolised. (See chaps. xi. 7; xiii. 1, 2; xvi. 2; xvii. 3, 7; xix. 19, 20; xx. 10.) But these "living beings" do not represent the evil element in the world. They are representative of animated nature. They are four in number—as there are four

third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle. [8] And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him;* and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not[1] day and night, saying, Holy,[a] holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,

[1] Gr. *they have no rest.*
[a] ch. i. 4, 8; Isa. 6. 3.

beings which hold a primacy in the world: among created beings, man; among birds, the eagle; among cattle, the ox; among untamed animals, the lion. The characteristics of these four chiefs of creation unite to make a perfect picture of the spirit of true service, which should be brave as the lion, patient as the ox, aspiring as the eagle, intelligent as man. It may here be noted that the number "four" in the Apocalypse is almost always associated with the earth. (See chap. vii. 1.) We need only call to mind the four quarters, four elements, four seasons, to see its fitness. (Comp. chap. xxi. 13, 16.) The living creatures are "full of eyes." This strong expression is used again in the next verse. Twice used, its meaning must be significant. The same idea is found in the later prophets of the Old Testament. The wheels of Ezekiel and their tires (Ezek. i. 18, and x. 12) were full of eyes. The stone of Zechariah had seven (the perfect number) eyes (Zech. iii. 9). The thought is emphasised again in chap. v. 6, where the Lamb is said to have seven eyes. Multiplicity of eyes may symbolise vitality and vigilance. Some have thought, inappropriately enough, that it signifies the unceasing praise of God's works. A better interpretation is given by Dr. Currey. "The power of nature is no blind force, it is employed in the service of God's providence, and all over it the stamp of reason is impressed." (See Speaker's *Commentary* on Ezek. i. 18.) May we not add that the force of nature is always observant of God's will? Its myriad eyes are fixed on Him, as the eyes of a servant on his master (Ps. cxxiii. 2); doing His commandment, hearkening unto the voice of His word (Ps. ciii. 20, 21); the eyes too of all creation wait on God, who gives them meat in due season (Ps. civ. 27, Prayer Book version)—

"His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

[8] **And the four beasts** (or, *living beings*) **had each of them** (literally, *one by one of them*) **six wings about him; and they were full of** (or, *teeming with*) **eyes.**—The last verse spoke of the living beings teeming with eyes; this tells us that neither the dropping nor the raising of their wings hindered their view.

And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.—The resemblance to Isaiah's vision (chap. vi. 1—4) may remind us that the voice of God's creation has in every age proclaimed His eternal holiness. The word "holy" is repeated eight times in the Sinaitic version. The "six wings" are taken to express reverence, for with twain (Isa. vi. 2) he covered

which was, and is, and is to come. (9) And when those beasts give glory, and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, (10) the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, (11) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for

his face; humility, for with twain he covered his feet; and obedience, for with twain he did fly. Some have understood these living beings to betoken rather the creative power of God than the actual creation. There is much to be said for this; but the analogy of the passage suits better the view here adopted. The twenty-four elders represent, not the regenerating power of God, but the regenerate Church. The new creation in Christ Jesus join in praise with all created things. The doxology in verse 11 favours the interpretation, "Thou hast created all things."

(9, 10) **And when those beasts . . .**—Better, *And whensoever the living beings shall give* (the future is used) *glory and honour and thanks to Him who sitteth upon the throne, to Him who liveth to the ages of ages, the four-and-twenty elders shall* (as is their wont) *fall down before Him who sitteth on the throne, and worship Him that liveth unto the ages of ages, and shall* (as is their wont) *cast their crowns before the throne, saying . . .* It is not to Him who sat upon the throne, but to Him who sitteth there, as he liveth to the ages of ages, that this homage is paid. The future tense (*shall* give glory, &c.) implies the eternal repetition of the act. The connection between the praise given by creation, and the consequent homage of the twenty-four elders, expresses a truth. The Church of Christ does not always hear the voice of praise from created things. Often the creation groaneth and travaileth; but her chorus of praise rises when she perceives that "every thing that hath breath praiseth the Lord." The converse of this thought—the earth bringeth forth her fruit when the people praise God—is hinted in Ps. lxvii. 5, 6, "the earth ceases her travail when the sons of God are made manifest" (Rom. viii. 19—21).

Crowns.—The crowns are not royal crowns, but the crowns of conquerors. These are laid down before the throne by those who overcame, not in their own might, but through the blood of the Lamb (chap. xii. 11; comp. chap. vii. 14).

(11) The doxology is threefold. (See Note on chap. i. 6.) It should run—

> "Worthy art Thou, O Lord and our God,
> To receive the glory, and the honour, and the power,
> Because Thou didst create all things,
> And through (or, *owing to—i.e.*, because of) Thy will they *were* (not 'are') and were created."

The existence of all things was owing to the will of God, as also was the creation of all things,

thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER V.—(1)And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne

which was the realisation or manifestation of that will.

V.

THE SEALED ROLL.—The vision of the previous chapter remains. The scenery does not shift, but the attention of the seer is now directed to one feature—the book, or roll, which was on the hand of the Throned One. This roll none in heaven, earth, or under the earth could open; but the Lamb takes the roll to open it, or to unfold its purport to the waiting world and Church; the Church and world praise Him who is the Light, revealing to them all they need to know.

(1) **And I saw in the right hand . . .**—Better, *And I saw on* (not "in;" the roll lay on the open palm of the hand) *the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne a book written within and behind, fast sealed with seven seals.* The book is, of course, in the form of a roll; it lies on the open hand of the Throned One; it was not His will that the book should be kept from any. It is written, not on the inside only, as was the usual way, but, like the roll of the book which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. ii. 9, 10), it was written within and without. Some have thought that there are two divisions of predictions—those written within the roll, and those written on the outer side. This is merely fanciful; the passage in Ezekiel which supplies a guidance to the meaning might have shown the erroneousness of the thought. Clearly the "lamentation and mourning and woe" inscribed all over Ezekiel's roll indicate the filling up of sorrows: here the same overflowing writing indicates the completeness of the contents; there was no room for addition to that which was written therein. But what is meant by the book? Numberless interpretations have been offered: it is the Old Testament; it is the whole Bible; it is the title-deed of man's inheritance; it is the book containing the sentence of judgment on the foes of the faith; it is the Apocalypse; it is part of the Apocalypse; it is the book of God's purposes and providence. There is a truth underlying most of these interpretations, but most of them narrow the force of the vision. If we say it is the book which unfolds the principles of God's government—in a wide sense the book of salvation (comp. Rom. xvi. 25, 26)—the interpretation of life, which Christ alone can bestow (see verses 3—6), we shall include, probably, the practical truths which underlie each of these interpretations; for all—Old Testament and New, man's heritage and destiny, God's purposes and providence—are dark, till He who is the Light unfolds those truths which shed a light on all. Such a book becomes one "which contains and interprets human history," and claims the kingdoms of the earth for God. The aim of all literature has

a book written within and on the backside,[a] sealed with seven seals. (2)And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? (3) And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. (4) And I wept much, because no man was found

Chaps. v. 1—vi. 17. The sealed book opened by the Lamb.

[a] Isa. 29. [illegible] 2 [illegible] 4.

been said by a distinguished critic to be little more than the criticism of life; the book which Christ unfolds is the key to the true meaning of life. The roll is not the Apocalypse so much as the book of those truths which are exemplified in the Apocalypse, as in a vast chamber of imagery. The roll was fast sealed, so that even those who were wise and learned enough to read it had it been unrolled could not do so (see Isa. xxix. 11). There are things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes.

(2) **And I saw a strong** (better, *mighty*) **angel proclaiming with** (or, *in*) **a loud voice, Who is worthy . . .**—We must not let the word "worthy" pass as though it were simply equivalent to "strong enough." It seems to imply moral fitness (comp. Rom. i. 4), which is the true strength in the heavenly world. It was not lack of intellectual capacity so much as the taint of moral unworthiness which hindered the reading of the book. This is in harmony with what we have noticed before. "To commune with God, there is need of no subtle thought, no foreign tongue, no newest philosophy: 'the pure in heart shall see Him:' and Foxe and Bunyan can more truly make Him known than 'masters of sentences' and 'angelic doctors.'" Those who are willing to do God's will know of God's doctrine. This thought corresponds, too, with the stress which is laid (in verse 5) on the victory of Christ. It is not simply as divine Son of God, but also as victorious Saviour and King of His people, that He opens the book: His worthiness has been established in conflict and temptation (John xiv. 30; Heb. ii. 9; iv. 15).

(3) **And no man . . .**—Or, better, *no one* (for it is of more than mankind that the Apostle speaks) *was able, in the heaven, nor on the earth, nor under the earth, nor even* (still less?) *to look thereon.* The looking on the book is usually understood of the look cast on the book of one who would read the contents. If so, the thought is, none could open, still less read, the roll. It may, however, be that all who attempted to take the book were unable to face the glory in which it lay. When Christ revealed Himself to Saul he could not see for the glory of that light.

(4) **And I wept much because no man** (better, *no one*) **was found worthy to open . . . the book** (omit, "and to read").—The Apostle is not ashamed to call attention to his tears. I, indeed, for my part (the "I" is em-

worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. (5) And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah,[a] the Root of David,[b] hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals there-

[a] Gen. 49. 9; Heb. 7. 14.
[b] Isa. 11. 1, 10; 53. 2; Zech. 6. 12.

phatic) wept much. It was not a failure of faith; it was the outburst of an earnest heart, to which the knowledge of God and the destinies of his fellow-men were very dear. Those who have longed to see the end of oppression, fraud, and sorrow on the earth, to know something of the laws which govern the present, and of their issue in the future, will understand these tears. "The words, 'I wept much,' can only be understood by those who have lived in great catastrophes of the Church, and entered with the fullest sympathy into her sufferings. . . . . Without tears the Revelation was not written, neither can it without tears be understood."

(5) **And one of the elders . . .**—Better, *And one from among the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion, which is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, conquered* (*so as*) *to open the roll, and the seven seals thereof.* The position of the word "conquered" is emphatic, and should receive greater prominence. The verse has been translated, "Behold, one conquered, (even) the Lion . . ." The right to open the roll is thus made to turn, as we noticed before, not merely on the divine Sonship of our Lord, but upon His victory: He conquered, and so opens the secret purposes of God to His Church. The thought is exactly parallel with other scriptures which give emphasis to the work of redemption. It is "for the suffering of death" that Christ is clothed "with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 9). Similarly St. Paul traces the exaltation of Christ as the outcome of His humiliation, "*wherefore* (*i.e.*, in consequence of His humiliation) God also hath highly exalted Him" (Phil. ii. 9). Thus Christ, who in conquest is seen to be the power of God, in revealing the true philosophy of history is seen to be the wisdom of God.

The Lion of the tribe of Juda.—The lion was the ancient symbol of the tribe of Judah. Jacob described his son as "a lion's whelp" (Gen. xlix. 9); the standard of Judah in the Israelitish encampment is said to have been a lion. It was the symbol of strength, courage, and sovereignty.

The Root of David.—The Lion is also the representative of the royal house of David. "Christ cometh of the seed of David" (comp. Mark xii. 35 with John viii. 42); the prophets have described Him as the Branch, which would spring from the ancient stock (Isa. xi. 1; Zech. vi. 12). But there seems also a reference to the deeper thought that He who is the Branch is also the Root (comp. Isa. xi. 10); He is the one who was David's Lord (Matt. xxii. 41—45), and "the true source and ground of all power" to David and David's tribe, and of all who looked to Him, and not to themselves for strength.

of. (6) And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven

(6) **And I beheld, and lo . . .** Better, *And I saw* (omit "and lo") *in the midst of the throne, and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb* (or, *a little Lamb*), *standing as if having been slain.* The position of the Lamb is described from the seer's point of view: the Lamb is not on the throne, but in the middle front of it, and so apparently between the living creatures, and in the midst of the circle formed by the twenty-four elders. The passage is most striking. The Evangelist is told of the *Lion* which will open the seals: he looks, and lo, it is a Lamb! yes, a little Lamb—for the word is diminutive. There is deep significance in this. When we read of the Lion, we think of power and majesty, and we are right; all power in heaven and earth is Christ's, but it is power manifested in seeming weakness. The waters of Shiloah are mightier than the Euphrates (Isa. viii. 6—8); righteousness and purity, meekness and gentleness are greater than carnal weapons (comp. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7; Eph. vi. 11, *et al.*); the Lamb mightier than the roaring lion which goeth about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. v. 8). But it is a Lamb as if it had been slain. The wound-marks are there, but it is not dead; it is standing, for it represents Him who though He died is alive for evermore; but the signs of suffering and death are visible, for it is not the Lamb, but the suffering Lamb, which is exalted; it is not the Christ, but the Christ crucified, which is the power of God; the Christ lifted up from the earth draws all men unto Him (John xii. 32; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24); the corn of wheat which dies brings forth fruit (John xii. 24). As such He is the worship of the Church and the world which He has redeemed. (See verses 8, 9; comp. chap. vii. 14.) The reference to earlier Scriptures (Ex. xii. 46; Isa. liii. 7; John i. 29, 36; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8) is not to be overlooked. From the tokens of suffering the seer passes to the tokens of strength and wisdom which he saw in the Lamb. He describes it as "having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth (or, *which are being sent forth*) into all the earth." The horn is the strength of the animal which carries it. It is so used in the blessing of Joseph: "His horns are like the horns of a wild bull" ("unicorns" in Authorised version); "with them shall he push the people together," &c. (Deut. xxxiii. 17; comp. Pss. lxxxix. 24; cxlviii. 14). The seven horns denote completeness or fulness of strength. The seven eyes, like the seven lamps (chap. iv. 5), represent the Holy Spirit in His manifold gifts of grace; but as they are described as eyes of the Lamb, they betoken His omniscience who is in heaven and yet by His Spirit, everywhere (Matt. xxviii. 20); whose eye is on all events, great and small; whose eyes behold the children of men.

Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. (7) And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. (8) And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of

Note also, that the seven spirits are ascribed to the Son as well as to the Father. (Comp. John xiv. 26; xv. 26.) The seven spirits are said to be "sent"; the word is from the same root as the word "apostle." There is an apostolate of the Spirit as well as an apostolate of the Church; and if we adopt the version here which gives the present participle, this spiritual apostolate is being continually exerted; the seven spirits are in process of being sent out by Him who says to this one "Go," and he goeth; and to the twelve, "Go ye into all the world," and who sends His Spirit to bestow upon His people grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

(7) **And he came.** — Better, *And He came, and He has taken* (omit the words "the book," and supply) *it* (*i.e.*, the roll) *out of the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne.* There is a change of tense ("came," "has taken"), which seems to be due to the rapt attention of the seer, whose narrative trembles with his own intensity of feeling. He wept awhile ago; now he need not weep. The Lamb conquered; He came; He has taken the roll. He is the wisdom of the Church; among all pre-eminent; all things will be reconciled in Him; the purpose and meaning of all life's mysteries and sorrows will be made plain in Him. (Comp. 1 Cor. i. 24; Eph. i. 9, 10; Col. i. 18.)

(8) **And when he had taken.** —Better, *And when He took the roll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, having each a harp, and golden vials* (or, *censers*) *full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints* (or, *the holy ones*). It is not the Church alone which is interested in the revelation which will throw light on life's mysteries and the delay of the kingdom; the whole creation groaneth, waiting for the reign of righteousness; and therefore the four living beings, who represent creation, join with the elders, who represent the Church, in the adoration of the Lamb who holds the secret of life's meaning in His hand. The vials (which seem to be censers, as they hold the incense) and the harps, it is perhaps more natural to suppose, were in the hands of the four-and-twenty elders, and not of the living creatures. Here, then, we have the praises (represented by the harps), and the prayers (represented by the censers) of the world-wide and age-long Church of Christ. The comparison of prayer with incense is in strict accordance with Old Testament language. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense" (Ps. cxli. 2). The incense held a conspicuous place in the ritual of the Temple. The greatest care was to be taken in the composition of the incense, and the

odours,[1] which are the prayers of saints. (9) And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou

[1] Or, *incense.*

wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) and hast made us unto our God kings

---

same compound was not to be used anywhere but in the sanctuary. These precautions suggest its typical character. The true odours are the heart-prayers of God's children. "Of these three sweet ingredient perfumes," says Archbishop Leighton, alluding to the composition of the Temple-incense, "namely, petition, confession, thanksgiving, is the incense of prayer, and by the divine fire of love it ascends unto God, the heart and all with it; and when the hearts of the saints unite in joint prayer, the pillar of sweet smoke goes up the greater and the fuller." Every prayer which broke out in sob from an agonising heart, every sigh of the solitary and struggling Christian, every groan of those groping God-ward, mingles here with the songs of the happy and triumphant.

(9, 10) **And they sung a new song, saying . . .**—Better, *And they sing a new song saying.* The use of the present ("sing") is another example of that intensity of interest of which the change of tense in the last verse afforded an instance. As he records his vision, he sees it anew; he describes the action, as though it were even now taking place, and he still hears the notes of praise. He who knows what it is to have the strains of some rich melody haunt him for days will understand how the prophet would hear the glad chorus burst forth afresh in his ears when he recalled the vision. The new song; the chorus of the redeemed—

> "Worthy art Thou to take the roll,
> And to open the seals thereof;
> For Thou wast slain,
> And didst buy to God in Thy blood
> Out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,
> And didst make them a kingdom and priests,
> And they reign upon the earth."

The English version, "hast redeemed," and "hast made," weakens the reference to the completed character of Christ's redeeming work. It is the great victory in suffering and death which inspires the song, and makes them sing, "Thou art worthy;" and so they speak of that work of Christ as a *work truly* done: "Thou didst buy (omit "us") out of every tribe, &c., and *didst* make them," &c. The suffering Saviour has died, has broken the bond of the oppressor, has claimed, by right of purchase, mankind as His own; and the price was His blood. It is well to notice the harmony between this passage and the statements of other Apostles: "Ye are not your own;" "bought with a price." (See 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; 2 Pet. ii. 1.) Observe also the *four* terms (tribe, tongue, people, nation), employed as if to give emphasis to the universality of redemption, for four is the number of extension in all directions. With this compare Rom. v. 15—19; Col. iii. 11; Heb.

and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (11)And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand,[a] and thousands of thousands;

[a] Dan. 7. 10; Heb. 12. 23.

ii. 9. We have a right to teach all to say, "He redeemed me and all mankind." It is instructive to dwell on the climax "they reign," in contrast with "Thou wast slain." It is like an anticipation of the now familiar words—

"Thine the sharp thorns, and mine the golden crown;
Mine the life won, and Thine the life laid down."

"Didst make them a kingdom and priests." (See chap. i. 6.) This kingdom and reign is the outcome of Christ's work. "Every precept of Christianity is quickened by the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is by the presence of this power that they are Christians, and it is as Christians that they conquer the world" (Westcott). "They reign on the earth." Such is the best reading; the tense is present. It is not, I think, to be explained away as a vivid realisation of the future; it is a simple statement, which is as true as that the followers of Christ are "a kingdom and priests." They reign with and in Christ, but they also reign on the earth. Christ gives them a kingship, even sovereignty over themselves—the first, best, and most philanthropic of all kingships. He gives them, too, a kingship on the earth among men, for they are exerting those influences, promoting those principles, and dispensing those laws of righteousness, holiness, and peace, which in reality rule all the best developments of life and history. All who traverse these laws are merely intruders, or transitory tyrants, who exert only a phantom power. They are not kings: they may govern, but they do not reign. (Comp. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23; Eph. ii. 6.)

(11) **And I beheld . . .**—More literally, *And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living beings, and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.* The chorus of the redeemed is followed by a chorus of angels; for "that which is the highest act of love, towards whatever persons it was manifested, from whatever calamities it saved them, must be the highest manifestation of the divine character and will; therefore must be the cause of delight to all creatures, fallen or unfallen. If the Revelation is true, there can be no breach in the sympathies of any part of God's voluntary and intelligent universe." It is needless to observe that the numbers here used are not to be taken literally; they are simply employed in a figurative sense to express the countless throng of that "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. xii. 22) which raised the song—

"Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy."
—*Paradise Lost*, iii. 346, 347.

(12) saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (13) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the

(12) **Saying with a loud voice . . .**—The second chorus: the chorus of angels—

"Worthy is the Lamb,
That hath been slain,
To receive the power,
And riches, and wisdom, and might,
And honour, and glory, and blessing."

The doxology is sevenfold. We have noticed (chap. i. 6) the increasing strength of the doxologies in which the redeemed take part. This, though a *sevenfold* one, does not interrupt that advance of praise; for in this chorus the redeemed do not take part. The definite article is prefixed to the word "power" only; in the doxologies of chaps. iv. 11 and vii. 12 it stands before each word. This has led some to view the single article as prefixed to all that follows, and to regard all the words as though they formed one word. May it not, however, be used to give emphasis to the "power"? None, above or below, was "able" (same word as "power" here) to open the book (verse 3); but the Lamb has conquered to open it, and the chorus proclaims the Lamb worthy of that power. Some have thought that the seven terms of the doxology refer to the seven seals which the Lamb is about to open. This seems strained. The notion of completeness is common to this sevenfold blessing and the seven seals; this is the only connection between them.

(13) **And every creature . . .**—The third chorus: the chorus of the universe. The song of the redeemed, echoed by the hosts of angels, is now merged in the utterance of all. "Every creature which is in the heaven and upon the earth, and beneath the earth, and upon the sea, and all the things that are in them, heard I saying—

"To Him that sitteth upon the throne,
And to the Lamb,
(Be) the blessing, and the honour,
And the glory, and the might,
To the ages of the ages."

The song of praise rises from all quarters, and from all forms of creation. The whole universe, animate and inanimate, joins in this glad acclaim. To limit it to either rational or animate creation is to enfeeble the climax which this third chorus forms to the two preceding ones, and is to denude the passage of its fulness and of its poetry. The Hebrew mind delighted in representing every bird and every grass-blade as joining in God's praise. "Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl," as well as kings of the earth and all people, were called on to bless the name of

Lamb for ever and ever. (14) And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* | twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

the Lord. Christian poets have told us that "Earth with her thousand voices praises God."

"Nature, attend! join every living soul,
Beneath the spacious temple of the sky,
In adoration join'd; and, ardent, raise
One general song! To Him, ye vocal gales,
Breathe soft, whose Spirit in your freshness breathes.
* * * And thou, majestic main,
A secret world of wonders in thyself,
Sound His stupendous praise, whose greater voice
Or bids you roar, or bids your roaring fall.
Soft roll your incense, herbs, and fruits, and flowers,
In mingled clouds to Him whose sun exalts,
Whose breath perfumes you, and whose pencil paints."
—Thomson, *Hymn to Seasons.*

The Apostle who pictured all creation as waiting in eager expectation for the full redemption—the redemption of "the body" (Rom. viii. 23), looked forward to the time when "the whole universe, whether animate or inanimate, would bend the knee in homage and raise its voice in praise" (Phil. ii. 10). The doxology which thus rises from the universe is appropriately fourfold: the definite article (omitted in the English version) must be supplied before each word ("*The* blessing," &c.). The two preceding songs were in honour of the Lamb; in this last the praise is addressed to the Throned One and to the Lamb. This linking of the Lamb with God as the Throned One is common throughout the book. Here they are linked in praise; in chap. vi. 16 they are linked in wrath; in chap. vii. 17 they are linked in ministering consolation; in chap. xix. 6, 7, they are linked in triumph. In the final vision of the book the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple (chap. xxi. 22) and the light (chap. xxi. 23), the refreshment (chap. xxii. 1) and sovereignty (chap. xxii. 3), of the celestial city.

And the four beasts . . .—Better, *And the four living beings said, Amen* (or, *the Amen*). *And the elders* (omit "four and twenty") *fell down and worshipped.* The remaining words of this verse are wanting in some of the best MSS., and they spoil the graphic force of the description. The "Amen" rises from universal nature; the Church of Christ falls down in silent adoration. Thought and feeling assert themselves above all language. There are times when silence is the most eloquent applause; there are times when it is also the most real worship. "Let thy prayers be without words, rather than thy words without prayer," was a wise precept of an old divine. An English and an Italian poet have given expression to the same feeling of the weakness of words. "O speech!" sang Dante, when telling his final vision—

"How feeble and how faint art thou to give
Conception birth."
—*Parad.* xxxiii.

Thomson takes refuge in silence from the overwhelming thoughts of the divine glory:—

CHAPTER VI. — A.D. 96.

Chap. vi. 1, 2. The first seal opened.

(1) And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder,

"I lose
Myself in Him, in light ineffable.
Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

Here the inspired seer describes the chorus of praise as dying into a silence born of awe and gratefulness and love.

VI.

THE VISION OF THE SEALS.—The relation of Christianity to great universal evils. The extinction of war, disease, death, persecution will not be immediate; the mission of Christianity is not to abolish them at once and by compulsion, but to undermine them; for her work is not coercion, but conviction, and is primarily to individuals, but only secondarily and indirectly to nations.

It is at this chapter that our most difficult work commences. We now enter upon the vexed sea of multitudinous interpretations. In the *Introduction* will be found a brief account of the principal schools of apocalyptic interpretation. It will be sufficient here to indicate the general view which appears the most simple and freest from difficulties. The seals which are opened by the Lamb seem to speak a double message. To the world they say, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" To the Church they say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." There are two lines of thought in the Bible, and these give rise to two apparently contradictory sets of pictures. There are the pictures of what would be the state of the world were the principles of Christ fully and universally accepted; and there are the pictures of the world as it will be because men do not fully accept them. The first set are the ideal, and include the abolition of war, social injustice, poverty, when the golden age and reign of righteousness shall dawn. When, however, we speak of this as ideal, we do not imply that it is visionary; it is the sober statement of what would actually take place were the rule of Christ admitted in the hearts and lives of men, and what will take place whenever they do so. But between this grand possibility and its realisation stands the wayward, and tortuous, and weakened human will, which either rejects or fatally but half adopts the teachings of God. This will of man, seen in a world which is directly hostile to Christ, and in a Church which is but half faithful to Him, must be convinced ere the true ideal of Christ shall be attained, and the fulness of His kingdom made manifest. Thus the ideal pictures are postponed, and the world, which might have been saved by love speaking in gentleness, must be saved by love speaking so as by fire. Now in the earlier Christian times the hope of an ideal kingdom, soon to be realised in the immediate establishment of Christ's kingdom, was very strong. The first disciples yearned to see it immediately set up. "Wilt thou at this time restore the king-

dom?" The golden light of hope lingered long in their minds; they lived in the memory of those prophecies which foretold the cessation of war, sorrow, pain, and death. They thought, now that Christ had come, the Messianic kingdom in its utter gladness must immediately appear. They forgot the Prince's visit to the far country; they forgot the citizens who hated Him, and rejected His rule; they forgot the session at God's right hand till His enemies were made His footstool. They thought the day of the Lord, in the sense of the perfecting of His reign, was at hand; they forgot that the Heavenly Bridegroom must gird His sword upon His thigh, and that His arrows must be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies (Ps. xlv. 3, 5). The vision of these seven seals is the repetition of the warning against such forgetfulness. The ideal Kingdom might come if mankind would receive it, but it must be established by conviction, not by coercion; and so the actual history of the growth of the Kingdom would be different from the ideal: the Church, like her Master, must be made perfect through sufferings; where He was, His servant must be; through much tribulation the Kingdom must be entered. The seals unfold, then, the general aspects of the world's history after Christ's ascension. Certain features would continue; war, famine, disease, death would remain. They might, indeed, have been abolished had Christ's own received Him; but as it was, the fact of the world's will being in opposition to God's will opposed the manifestation of the peaceful Kingdom. Thus the scenes which the seals unfold are but the pictorial statement of Christ's own utterances in Matt. xxiv. 6, 7. "Ye shall hear of wars; there shall be famines and pestilences." It will be seen, then, that the seals tell the seer that these troubles will exist till the times of the end. The Church through him is warned to prepare for her mission of suffering; and in this way the vision stretches on till the close of earth's history.

But this is not all. The visions of the book may have preliminary applications, because the principles on which they are constructed are eternal ones. Our Lord's own language in Matt. xxiv. is our guarantee that we may look for such preliminary applications. The story of the overthrow of many a nation presents these features of war, famine, misery, convulsion. The fall of Jerusalem, as well as that of the Roman Empire, was preceded by such. On this principle, other interpretations of the vision have a truth in them, as long as they are confined to broad, general principles; the mischievous affection for trivial details has been the bane of more than one school of interpreters.

It is perhaps worthy of notice that these seals are not to be regarded as being fulfilled one after another: in point of fact, the horseman of war and the horseman of pestilence have often ridden together. Yet it is true that there is a tendency in one to produce the other; war does lead to famine, famine does produce pestilence. There is, perhaps, also an applica-

(2) And I saw, and behold | a white horse: and he

tion of these seals to the history of the Church. Her first era is that of purity and conquest; her next is that of controversy—the war of opinions; the age of controversy gives rise to the age of spiritual scarcity, for men intent upon controversy forget the true Bread, which came down from heaven, and a famine of the word of God succeeds; and out of this there emerges the pale horse of spiritual death, the parody of the victorious rider—the form of godliness without the power, the age of irreligious ritualism: the hidden ones of Christ may then be revealed, crying "How long?" and finally the age of revolution comes to overthrow the old order and give birth to the new.

(1) **And I saw when the Lamb** (the diminutive form of Lamb is still used) . . .—The words "and see" are doubtful. They are found in some MSS. and omitted in others: the authority for their omission and for their retention is about equally divided. Under these circumstances we may fairly be guided by the context. To whom is the summons addressed? Who is bidden to come? If it was taken to be addressed to the seer, we can understand why some copyist should add the words "and see." But are they addressed to the seer? It seems difficult to see the purpose of such a command. He was near already. He had seen the Lamb opening the seal. There was no object in his drawing near. Are the words, then, addressed, as Alford supposes, to Christ? It is difficult to believe that the living creature would thus cry to the Lamb, who was opening the scroll. The simplest way of answering the question is to ask another: Who did come in obedience to the voice? There is but one answer—the horseman. The living beings cry "Come," and their cry is responded to by the appearance of the several riders. What is the spiritual meaning of this? The living beings represent, as we have seen, animated nature—that nature and creation of God which groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. These summon the emblems of war and pestilence to come on the scene, for these things must needs be, and through these lies the way for the final coming of God's Christ, for whom creation longs. They bid the pains and troubles come, because they recognise them as the precursors of creation's true King. Thus their voice has in it an undertone which sighs for the advent of the Prince of Peace, who is *to come*.

(2) **Conquering, and to conquer.** — Better, *conquering, and that he might conquer*. One version has, "and he conquered." All commentators seem to be agreed that this rider represents victory. The emblems—the crown and white horse—are obviously those of victory. The crown (*stephanos*) is the crown of triumph. The horses used in Roman triumphs were white. On the white horse of triumph the crowned rider goes forth conquering, and that he might conquer. But who or what is here represented? Some take it to be

that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. (3) And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. (4) And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a

[a] Zech. 1. 8; 6. 2.

Chap. vi. 3, 4. The second seal opened.

a mere emblem of conquest, or victory, as the next rider represents war. There is then a harmony of interpretation: the horseman reveal to the seer that the after-history will be marked by conquests, wars, famines, pestilences. The description, however, seems to demand something more: the expression, "that he might conquer," carries our thoughts beyond a mere transient conqueror. The vision, moreover, was surely designed to convey an assured happy feeling to the mind of the seer. No picture of mere Roman conquests or world-victory would have conveyed this. Is not the vision the reflex of the hopes of early Christian thought? It is the symbol of Christian victory. It was thus their hopes saw Christ: though ascended He went forth in spiritual power conquering. They were right in their faith, and wrong in their expectation. Right in their faith: He went forth conquering, and He would conquer. Wrong in their expectation: the visions of war, famine, death must intervene. It was through these that the conqueror would be proved more than conqueror. It is, perhaps, significant of this intervening period of trouble and suffering that the rider is armed with a bow. The arrows of His judgments (war, famine) would be sharp among those who refused the sword of His word. For those who will not turn He hath bent His bow and made it ready. His arrows are ordained against the persecutors.

(3, 4) **And when he had opened . . .**—Better, *And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living being, saying, Come. And there came forth another horse, red; and to him that sat on him was given to take peace from the earth, and that they* (*i.e.*, the inhabitants of the earth) *shall kill one another, and there was given to him a great sword.* This seal is the distinct and unmistakable declaration to the Church that they must look for wars, even after the Prince of Peace has come. The advent of the highest good does not work peace, but only because the hindrance is in man. Man's resistance to good turns the gospel of peace into an occasion for the sword. So our Lord declares, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." The reign of peace, the beating of swords into ploughshares, is not yet. The vision may help to fix the Christian position about war. It is to be expected; it is an evil, but often an inevitable evil. Those

great sword. (5) And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I be-

Chap. vi. 5, 6. The third seal opened.

held, and lo a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. (6) And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure

The word rendered measure denotes a dry measure, and the twelfth part of a quart.

who take part in war are not condemned: those who occasion offences are. It is as much a mistake to condemn soldiering as a profession as it is to deny that Christianity aims at the suppression of war. She admits the soldier to be a soldier of Christ, even while she keeps before her the ideal age when nations shall learn war no more. We expect wars, even while we believe that the day will come when war will be reckoned as absurd as duelling is now. The vision says, "It must needs be that wars will come;" and war, even when roused by the passions of men, is a judgment of God, for God's judgments are mostly formed out of man's vices. The seal puts in pictorial form the warning of Christ that wars and rumours of wars would be heard of. How true the warning the after-history shows —wars in the empire, wars among nations, controversies, and often fratricidal wars in the Church of Christ.

(5, 6) When He had opened.—Better, *When he opened.* The words "and see" are to be omitted here, as in the other seals. *And I saw, and behold a horse, black, and he that sat on him having a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living beings, saying, a chœnix of wheat for a denarius* (penny), *and three chœnixes of barley for a denarius* (penny), *and the oil and the wine do thou not hurt.* "Balance:" There is scarcely a doubt that a balance, or pair of scales, is intended (the Greek word also means a yoke); but the whole imagery of the seal harmonises with the balance, and the passage from Ezekiel (Ezek. xlv. 10), cited by Alford, in which there is a "righteous balance" (the LXX. using the same Greek word as here) seems conclusive. It is the emblem of scarcity; food is not weighed out thus in times of abundance. (Comp. Ezek. iv. 16, "Behold I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they shall eat bread by weight and with care.") The chœnix ("measure" in English version) was the amount of food sufficient to support a man for a day. "A chœnix is the daily maintenance" (Suidas, quoted by Alford). The denarius ("penny" of English version, here and in Matt. xviii. 28, and Mark xii. 37) amounted to between sixpence and sevenpence of our money, and was the usual daily pay of the labourer, and of the soldier. (See especially Note on Matt. xx. 2.) It is difficult to speak of this as other than terribly high prices for food. The whole of a man's pay goes for food, and even the coarser bread is so expensive that it takes a whole day's wages to supply food for three

of wheat for a penny," and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine. [7] And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. [8] And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them [1] over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with

[a] Gen. 41. 49. Lev. 26. 26. Ezek. 4. 16.

Chap. vi. 7, 8. The fourth seal opened

[1] Or, *to them.*

adults. It has been thought that the voice calls to the rider to check his devastations, lest the growing famine should exterminate the whole human race. This may be, but the check is at a point which has already wrought the highest misery. The extent of the misery may be imagined by imagining what wretchedness would be entailed were a man obliged to pay three or four shillings for bread sufficient to keep him nourished for a day. Or we may measure it by the estimate of the disciples (Mark vi. 37) that two hundred pennyworth of bread would give a short meal to upwards of five thousand people. At the price in this seal, the cost of bread would have so risen that the two hundred pennyworth of bread would not suffice to feed one thousand. But what is meant by the words, "the oil and wine do thou not hurt"? They were not, like the bread, necessary to life, but among its luxuries and superfluities. There is a kind of irony in times of straitness, when the necessaries are scarcely to be had, and the luxuries remain comparatively low in price. The splendours and comforts of life are held cheap, when hunger is showing that the life is more than the dainty meat, and the body than raiment. The seal then tells the seer that in the ages the Church of Christ must expect to see famines and distress in the world, and luxuries abounding in the midst of straitness. Is it not true that the contrast, which is so ugly, between pampered opulence and indolent pauperism, is the result of the prevalence of world-principles? Wealth, self-indulgent and heartless, and poverty, reckless and self-willed, are sure tokens that the golden rule of Christ is not understood and obeyed. There is a similar experience in the history of the Church. The red horse of controversy is followed by the black horse of spiritual starvation. In the heat of polemical pride and passion for theological conquest is developed that love of barren dogmatics which forgets the milk of the word and the bread of life, which are the needed food of souls.

(7, 8) **The fourth seal.**—*And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being, saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a horse, pallid* (or, *livid*), *and he that sat upon him his name was Death, and Hades was following with him; and there was given to them power over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword,*

sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (9) And when he had opened the

and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth. The colour pallid, or *livid*, is that deadly greenish hue, which is the unmistakable token of the approach of death. The rider is Death—not a particular form of death, but Death himself. Attending him, ready to gather up the slain, is Hades. The fourth seal is the darkest and most terrible. Single forms of death (war and famine) were revealed in the earlier seals; now the great King of Terrors himself appears, and in his hand are gathered all forms of death—war, famine, pestilence (for the second time the word "death" is used: it must be taken in a subordinate sense, as a particular form of death, such as plague, or pestilence; we may compare the use of the word "death" thus applied to some special disease, in the case of The Death, or Black Death), and wild beasts. These forms of death correspond with God's four sore judgments—the sword, and famine, and pestilence, and the noisome beasts of Ezek. xiv. 21. The seal, therefore, gathers up into one all the awfulness of the past seals. It is the central seal, and it is the darkest. It is the midnight of sorrows, where all seems given up to the sovereignty of death. The middle things of life are often dark. Midway between the wicket-gate and golden city Bunyan placed his valley of the shadow of death, following the hint of the Psalmist, who placed it midway between the pasture and the house of the Lord (Ps. xxiii.). Dante, perhaps working from the same hint, found his obscure wood and wanderings midway along the road of life:—

> "In the midway of this our mortal life
> I found me in a gloomy wood, astray."

The darkest periods of the Church's history were those we call the Middle Ages. By this, however, it is not meant that there is any chronological signification in the seal. The vision deepens in its central scene, like the horror of darkness in the dream of Abraham. The history of the Church has not unfrequently presented a sort of parallel. The age which follows the ages of barren dogmatism and of spiritual starvation is often an age of sham spiritual life. The pale horse of death is the parody of the white horse of victory: the form of godliness remains, the power is gone.

(9–11) **The fifth seal** differs from the four earlier seals. It is not introduced by the voice of the living beings, and the cry "Come." The voice which is now heard is not the cry of the groaning world, but of the oppressed and troubled Church. In the fourth seal the climax of world-sorrow seemed to be reached in the accumulation of war, famine, pestilence, and noisome beasts. It declared to the evangelist that there were evils which would continue and even increase in the world. "Ye shall hear of wars; nation shall rise against nation." Social troubles, war, poverty, and privation would still exist; religious troubles, evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse. Worldly policy, selfishness, and the untamed passions of mankind would

fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony

Chap. vi. 9—11. The fifth seal opened.

still trouble humanity. Then if such troubles and disorders remain what has the Church been doing? Where is the promise of that early vision of victory? The answer is given in the fifth seal. The Church has been following her Lord. As the vision of Bethlehem and the angel-song of "peace on earth" passed, and made way for the agony of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, and the cry "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" so the glowing dream of a quick conquest over all evil passes away, and the picture of an agonising, persecuted Church takes its place, and the voice of its anguish is heard, "How long, O Lord!" The Church has her Bethlehem, her Nazareth, her Gethsemane, her Calvary, her Easter morn; for Christ said, "Where I am there shall also My servant be" (John xii. 26). The seals, then, are not merely visions of war, famine, &c., they are the tokens that the victory of Christ's Church must, like her Lord's, be a victory through apparent failure and certain death. The four seals proclaim her apparent failure; she has not brought peace and social and political harmony to the world. The fifth seal shows her suffering, the witness of the servants of Christ has been rejected; in the world they have tribulation (John xvi. 33).

(9) **I saw under the altar . . .** —Read, *when He opened*, and, instead of "were slain," &c., *had been slain because of the Word of God, and (because of) the testimony which they held.* The seal indicates that the mission of the Christian Church can only be carried out in suffering. An altar is seen, and at its foot tokens of the martyrs who had laid down their lives upon it. The word "souls" is to be taken as the equivalent of "lives"; the vision tells that their lives had been sacrificed. The blood of the victims was in the temple service poured out at the foot of the altar. St. Paul makes use of the same imagery —"I am now ready to be *poured out*" ("offered" in English version). In union with Christ Christians are called upon to suffer with Him, even to carry on to its great end the work of Christ in the world, and so fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ (Col. i. 24). The word "souls" has been made a resting-place for an argument respecting the intermediate state. There is no ground for this: it is quite beside the object of the seal, which simply exhibits the sufferings of Christ's people as the necessary accompaniment of the progress of the gospel. These sufferings are because of the Word of God and the testimony which they held. It was because of the Word of God and the testimony that the sacred seer himself suffered (chap. i. 9). The words here remind us that the same issue which St. John fought, the suffering ones of after-ages would be fighting. Their witness and his was the God-man; to this testimony they clung. They were not ashamed of Christ, or of His words,

which they held: [a] (10) and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (11) And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should

[a] Gen. 4. 10; Phil. 3. 10; Col. 1. 24; 1 Pet. 4. 13.

---

and they suffered for their courage and fidelity.

(10) **How long . . .?**—Better, *Until when, O Master* (the word is the correlative of "servant," see verse 10) *the Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood from* (*on*) *those who dwell on the earth?* By a dramatic figure the persecuted and slain ones are represented as crying for retribution on their oppressors. It is not the Christians themselves (Luke xxiii. 34; and Acts vii. 60) who cry for vengeance, any more than it was Abel himself who cried from the ground to God: it was the blood of Abel (Gen. iv. 10), the earth disclosed her blood, and refused to cover her slain. The forgotten or ignored wrongs of generations come forth from oblivion and cry for vengeance. It is a poetical description, but it is not fiction. The righteous blood shed does fall upon the world in retribution: the laws of God avenge themselves, though the victims do not live to behold the reward of the ungodly. On the epithets *Holy* and *True*, see Notes on chap. iii. 7.

(11) **And white robes were given . . .**—The victims, however, are not forgotten. *There was given to them* (*each*) *a white robe.* The white robes, the glistening apparel of the saints (comp. chap. iii. 4, 5), shall be theirs; each shall receive it. They are robes of righteousness (chap. xix. 8); they are robes of honour (chap. iv. 4), for those who wear them are like God, seeing Him as He is, reflecting His image; they are acknowledged to be His, as they have acknowledged Him to be their God. Persecuted on earth, they are honoured in heaven. There is also a sense in which a white robe is given to them in the eyes of men: those whose names have been cast out as evil have been honoured by a repentant posterity with the robe of tardy praise; after-generations garnish the sepulchres of the righteous whom their fathers slew. The excommunicated in one age are often the canonised of the next, for the dull world learns slowly, and its purest honours are posthumous. But however this may be, for the suffering saints there is the heavenly robe and the heavenly rest.

It was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed (better, *who are to be slain*) **as they were, should be fulfilled** (or, *shall have fulfilled their course*).—They are to "rest." This does not mean that they are to cease their cry for vengeance, for the saints have never cried for this: but they are to rest, as the souls of

be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled. (12)And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; (13) and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs,[1] when she

Chap. vi. 12—17. The sixth seal opened.

[1] Or, *green figs.*

the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, in joy and felicity. But this rest is yet a waiting for a little while till fellow-servants and fellow-sufferers have achieved their work also. To every disciple a work is given in service and suffering, and till these have borne their witness and fulfilled their course (comp. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, and Acts xiii. 25), the departed must wait for their perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul.

(12—17) **The sixth seal.**—The seals follow the lines laid down by our Lord in Matt. xxiv. There He tells His disciples that wars (verse 6), famines, and pestilences (verse 7), and persecutions (verse 9) are to be expected; these are necessary features in the history of the world. But these features are described by our Master as preliminary to His Coming and the end of the world (Matt. xxiv. 3), and that when these had wrought their work then the Coming of the Son of Man would take place (verses 29—31). With this guide, it is impossible for us to deny that the opening of this sixth seal has reference to the Coming of the Son of Man, and finds its final and ultimate fulfilment in the day when He will come to gather His elect from the four winds. But it is not to be forgotten that our Lord wished us to regard certain great culminating epochs as in a secondary sense His advents. The eagles which swept down upon the carcase of any corrupt nationality were certain proofs of His reign and true shadows of His coming. The features indicated in the seals have a sequence which has been frequently reproduced in the history of nations and churches. The promise of good; the breaking forth of the spirit of violence and anarchy; the time of social misery, want, disease; the oppression of the good; revolution—these have repeated themselves in Jewish, Roman, French, and other histories; and the prophecy is not exhausted yet.

(12—14) **And I beheld . . .**—Better, *And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and* (omit "lo!") *a great shaking took place, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon all became as blood, and the stars of the heaven fell to the earth, as a fig-tree casts its winter figs when shaken by a great wind, and the heaven departed like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.* It is well to keep in mind the parallel imagery of the Old Testament. The *shaking* ("earthquake," is hardly an adequate rendering, as the shaking extends to heaven as well as earth) was spoken of by Haggai: "Yet once for all" (not

is shaken of a mighty wind. [14] And the heaven departed as a scroll when | [a] Isa. 34. 4. | it is rolled together; [a] and every mountain and island were moved out of their

"once more," as in the English version) "shake I not the earth only, but also the heavens. And this word 'Once for all' signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken" (Hag. ii. 6, and Heb. xii. 26, 27). *Sun black as sackcloth:* Joel has a similar thought—"the sun shall be turned into darkness" (Joel ii. 30, 31); and Isaiah, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (Isa. l. 3). *The moon as blood* is repeated from Joel ii. 30, 31. The *falling of the stars of heaven* has its parallel in Isa. xxxiv. 3, 4, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved." *As a fig-tree* is an echo of Isa. xxxiv. 4. It will be seen by these passages how closely the writer of the Apocalypse has kept to the Old Testament imagery; and that events, such as great calamities, changes, and revolutions in the world's history, are described by emblems similar to those used here. St. Peter, for example, illustrates the great spiritual revolution of the Day of Pentecost by the passage from Joel, "The sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood." Hence it seems right to regard the language here as figurative, and to bear in mind that, though its fullest application belongs to the final advent, there may be many anticipatory advents. The judgment is often rehearsed before the day of judgment; the ages of oppression end in a day of catastrophe and confusion in which the righteous laws of a righteous King avenge themselves on the law breakers; the old lights and landmarks are for a time obliterated, and feeble, but pretentious, religionists are swept off as autumn figs from the fig-tree, and the proud and mighty are dismayed; things come to a crisis, and men "are proven by the hour" of that judgment; the unripe or untimely fruit drops off, as those who have no root in themselves fall away, and as the feebly-founded house fell in the tempest (Matt. vii. 26, 27). If this be so in the minor and preliminary crisis of the world, how much more so in the final crisis, which will try all? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The *untimely* figs, or unripe figs, are the *grossos*, or winter figs, which grow under the leaves, and do not ripen at the proper season, but hang upon the trees till the winter. They are a fit emblem of those who have not used the opportunity and season to ripen for God. Like the unwise virgins, they have not replenished their lamps with oil; or, to use the unique expression of St. Luke, they bring no fruit to perfection (Luke viii. 14). The crisis thus puts the feeble, timid, and negligent to the test, and also proves the vanity of those who make any world-power their confidence. As the day of the Lord of which Isaiah spoke was upon every one that was proud and lifted up, upon the cedars and oaks, upon the towers and fenced walls, upon the loftiness and haughtiness of men, in like manner does the Apocalyptic seer behold the dismay which falls upon every form of

places. (15) And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; (16) and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us,[a] and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath

[a] Luke 23. 30.

vaingloriousness, pretence, and pride.

(15–17) **And the kings . . . .**— Translate, *And the kings of the earth, and the magnates, and the commanders of hosts, and the wealthy, and the strong, and every man, bond and free, hid themselves* (*going*) *into the caves and into the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the day, the great* (*day*) *of His wrath came* (or, *is come*); *and who is able to stand?* In the list of the great ones here we may notice the descending order —kings, magnates, or statesmen, generals, rich men, strong men, bond and free men. The terror strikes into every class: monarchs and their advisers, the statesmen and diplomatists, the commanders of troops, the merchant princes, the men of ability, as well as the obscurer orders of society. Neither royalty nor rank, nor force of arms, nor opulence, nor talent, nor strength, either of intellect or frame, avail in that crisis; neither does insignificance escape in that day when God brings to light the hidden things. The tests of God are spiritual, as the weapons of God's war are not carnal. Men who have relied upon wealth, rank, or power, have prepared themselves against one form of trial, but find themselves unarmed in the day of spiritual testing. Like Macbeth, they are unable to fight with the unexpected shape which haunts them. They would much rather meet the bodily foe, "who would dare them to the desert with a sword."

Thus in the final day of judgment the revealing of the spiritual order of all life will confound men whose minds have been blinded by their entire absorption in world-splendours and world-powers. Nor is it merely the unveiling of the forgotten spiritual order which will confound them. The advent is of a Person. It is more than the manifestation of the kingdom of Him who all this while had been King on His throne, and whom they had forgotten—it is the revealing of the Son of God from heaven. It is not without some significance that He is described as the Lamb. In that day of His wrath, it is not merely as a Judge who has laid aside the tokens of His humiliation and suffering: but it is likewise as the Lamb. He whom they now shrink from is He who came meek as a lamb, gentle, pure, and suffering on their behalf. He whom they now behold with dismay is He whom they treated with neglect, and whose love they spurned.

of the Lamb: [17] for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

[17] **Who shall be** (or, *is*) **able to stand?**—The thought is derived from Mal. iii. 2, which spoke of a coming of the Lord. Every advent of Christ is the advent of one whose fan is in His hand, and who will thoroughly purge His floor. Whether it be His advent in the flesh, He tested men; or whether one of His advents in Providence—such as the fall of Jerusalem, the overthrow of Pagan Rome, the convulsions of the Reformation and Revolution epochs of history—He still tests men whether they are able to abide in faith and love the day of His coming; and much more, then, in the closing personal advent, when these visions will receive their fullest illustration, will He try men. "Who is able to stand?" It is the question of questions. Christ's answer is: "Apart from Me ye can do nothing." "Let your loins be girt about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like to men that wait for their Lord's coming." And parallel is St. Paul's advice: "Wherefore take unto you (not the weapons on which men rely, but) the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." This anxiety that his converts should be ready for the day of testing is continually appearing in his Epistles. Comp. the recurrence of "the day of Christ" in Phil. i. 6, 10, and the Apostle's wish that the Philippians might be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; and St. John's desire that Christians should not "be ashamed before Him at His coming," and "may have boldness in the day of judgment" (1 John ii. 28, and iv. 17). "Who is able to stand?" The question is answered in the next chapter. They shall stand who are sealed with the seal of the living God.

The sixth seal does not give us a completed picture. We see the great and awe-inspiring movements which are heralds of the day of wrath. The whole world is stirred and startled at the tread of the approaching Christ, and then the vision melts away; we see no more, but we have seen enough to be sure that the close of the age is at hand. Yet we are anxious to know something of those who have been faithful, pure, and chivalrous witnesses for truth and right, for Christ and God. In that day, that awful day, the whole population of the world seems to be smitten with dismay; the trees, shaken with that terrible tempest, seem to be shedding all their fruit; the trembling of all created things seems to be about to shake down every building. Are all to go? Are none strong enough to survive? We heard that there were seven seals attached to the mystic book which the Lion of the tribe of Judah was opening; but this sixth seal presents us with the picture of universal desolation: what is there left for the seventh seal to tell us? The answer to these questions is given in the seventh chapter, which introduces scenes which may either be taken as dissolving views, presented in the course of the sixth seal, or as complementary visions. And those

CHAPTER VII.—

Chap. vii. 1—17. The two assuring visions: the vision of security (1—8).

(1) And after these things I saw four angels standing

A.D. 96.

on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the

scenes show us in pictorial form that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation: that in the midst of the time of the shaking of all things, when all might, majesty, strength, and genius of men is laid low, and every mere earth-born kingdom is overthrown, there is a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The germ of life was indestructible, and ready to break forth in fruit again: an ark, which sheltered all that was good, moved ever secure over the desolating floods:—

"I looked: aside the dust-cloud rolled,
The waster seemed the builder too;
Upspringing from the ruined old
I saw the new.

"'Twas but the ruin of the bad—
The wasting of the wrong and ill;
What'er of *good the old time had*
Was living still."

VII.

(1) **And after these things** . . .—Better, *And after this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding fast the four winds of the earth, that there might not blow a wind upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree.* In the sixth seal the winds had blown, and had shaken violently the fig-tree, causing its untimely figs to drop off: the untimely or winter figs represented those whose religious life was unequal to the strain of trial, and who failed in the crisis to which they were exposed. But is all the fruit shaken off? No; Christ had said that "if a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch;" but that those who abode in Him, purged by their trials, would bring forth more fruit, and the fruit which these bore was not a fruit easily shaken off, but fruit that should remain (John xv. 6, 5, 16). They would not be as winter figs, easily torn from the boughs, for their strength was in God: before the stormy winds of manifold trials had blown they had been sealed with the seal of the living God. This is the scene which is brought before us in this chapter. In it the care of God, who restrains from violence the winds, that they should not shake too soon the immature fruit, the tokens by which the sealed are known and the meaning of their sealing are set forth. The chapter, in fact, answers the solemn question of the last chapter: "Who is able to stand?" The winds are clearly emblems of days of trouble or judgment; as the winds sweep away the chaff and clear the atmosphere, so do judgments try the ungodly, who are like the chaff which the wind driveth away: the storm of God's judgments shakes the mountains and the wilderness, and strips the oaks of the forest. (Comp. Ps. xxix.) These winds of judgment are ready to blow from all quarters (four corners of the earth), but they are restrained till the servants of God are sealed. For pas-

sea, nor on any tree. [2] And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the

sages where winds are used as emblems of judgment, see especially Jer. xlix. 36, 37, "Upon Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven. And I will bring evil upon them, even My fierce anger, saith the Lord." Comp. also Dan. vii. 2, "I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." But those tempests would not arise or shake a single leaf till the securing of God's servants was accomplished.

[2] **And I saw another angel . . .**—Translate, *And I saw another angel going up from the rising of the sun, having a seal of the living God, and he was crying with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to injure the earth and the sea, saying, Injure ye not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.* The angels appear as carrying out the purposes of God. This angel rises into view from the door of the dawn. In the midst of the dark symptoms of coming storm and judgment there springs up a light for the righteous and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted: they need not be afraid of evil tidings whose hearts stand fast believing in the Lord. This angel carries a seal of the living God. The seal is the emblem of security. The seal was placed on our Lord's sepulchre to keep the tomb safe from invasion; the king's seal was, in the same way, placed on the stone which was laid at the mouth of the den in which Daniel was imprisoned: "the king sealed it with his own signet" (Dan. vi. 17). The intrusting of the seal into the hands of others was the token that royal authority had been for the time delegated to man. So Jezebel "wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal" (1 Kings xxi. 8). Esther obtained the use of the king's seal to protect her countrymen from the mischief devised by Haman: "for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse" (Esth. viii. 8). There is also a seal of the living God. St. Paul tells us that this seal bears two legends. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his,' and 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. ii. 19). On the one side, it is dependence on and communion with God; on the other side, it is holiness of life. The sealed are found in Christ, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. iii. 9). For this is the righteousness which will endure to the end, and which is found in them who are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 13, 14). God's image and superscription is impressed on such; just as afterwards we are told of all the servants of God, "His name shall be in their foreheads" (chap. xxii. 4). This token is a true safe-guard and

four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, [3] saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. [4] And I

talisman; as the sprinkled blood on the lintel protected the house from the destroying angel at the first Passover. It is a token also of those who have not conformed to the evil world; they are like those whom Ezekiel saw in Jerusalem, when the Lord sent the man with the inkhorn "to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" (Ezek. ix. 4). There has been much misapprehension respecting this act of sealing. It has been said that it implies security, and assures God's servants of protection in the coming judgments: this is, in a sense, true; but the sealing, as will have been seen by the passages quoted above, is that sealing of the Spirit, that root of heavenly life in the soul, which is the pledge of the soul's union with God; and the terms of the charter of their protection are, Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? In the Bible idea, sin, or moral defilement, is the only real evil; all other things work together for good. The breastplate which turns aside the fiery darts is the breastplate of righteousness: those who, escaping the corruptions which are in the world through lust, become partakers of the divine nature are in consequence victorious over all the evil. They are not exempt from the vicissitudes and tribulation of life: the winds are let loose to blow, but they are sealed, and they cannot be shaken; for what and who can separate them from the love of Christ? They are sealed by the Holy Spirit; they have an earnest of that Spirit in their hearts (Eph. iv. 30, and 2 Cor. i. 22), and the pledge of His power in their lives. St. John gives the same two-fold test as St. Paul (2 Tim. ii. 9): (1) "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John iv. 13); and (2) "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John ii. 3). The sealing is on the forehead: it is God's mark, but it is where all may see it. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The cry of the angel is, Injure not the sea nor the trees. Doubtless the sea and trees are mentioned as these are the objects which would be most disturbed and injured by a storm of wind. Trees are used as emblems of real and of pretended religionism. The true-hearted in faith are described as trees planted by the waterside, whose fruit does not wither; and it is singular that St. Jude, who pictures the Antinomian teachers of his day under the image of autumn trees (not trees whose fruit withereth, as in English version) without fruit, immediately adds an expression which almost suggests the sudden uprising of a testing storm: the fruitless trees are "plucked up by the roots" (Jude, verse 12).

[4] **And I heard the number of them . . .**—Translate, *And I*

heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (5) Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand. (6) Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were*

heard the number of the sealed: there were a hundred and forty and four thousand sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. There are two or three questions which these verses suggest. What are we to understand by the number twelve thousand from each tribe? Who are these who are drawn from the tribes of Israel? Why is there a change of the order and names of the tribes? It may help us to clearer thoughts to take the second of these questions first. (1) Who are these one hundred and forty-four thousand? An answer to this has been partly anticipated in our previous comments; but perhaps a fuller consideration is needed. Some have thought that the sealed ones must be Jewish Christians: *i.e.*, they are disposed to take the twelve tribes literally. The scope of the previous verses seems decisive against this view. The time of judgment and trial is drawing near; we have seen the tokens of the coming storm in the opening of the sixth seal; our wish is to know the lot of the saints of God; this chapter answers this wish: they are safe, having the seal of God. Now, to limit the answer to the Israelitish Christians is to break in abruptly upon the general flow of thought with a bold literalism. The sealed ones are explained to be the servants of God; the description which follows proclaims them to be the "Israel of God." It would be a strange leap away from the subject to introduce a sudden limitation of thought. Nor is there any necessity for doing so. Israelitish and Jewish names are freely adopted by the sacred writers, and used in a spiritual sense without any explanation of such usage; and the Apostle most emphatically laid down the principle that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29); and the principle he applies by affirming that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. iii. 28). The Christian Church absorbs the Jewish, inherits her privileges, and adopts, with wider and nobler meaning, her phraseology. She has her Jerusalem, but it is a heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. xii. 22): a Jerusalem from above (Gal. iv. 26): a new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2; see chap. iii. 12); and to that Jerusalem of God the true Israel of God, the chosen generation and royal priesthood of every age, turn the

sealed twelve thousand. (7) Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand. (8) Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the

---

eye of faith. It is needless to say that this view does not rob, as it has been said, the Jew of God's promises; it only intensifies those promises by showing the growth of that Church in which the Jew may yet find the truest consummation of his holiest and highest hopes, and into which God is yet able to graff them in again (Rom. xi. 23, 25, 26), and in which he may yet play a part loftier than men dream of. (2) How are we to understand the numbers? As we cannot adopt the literal interpretation of the tribes of Israel, still less can we admit a literal interpretation of the numbers here mentioned; but they are not on this ground to be looked upon as meaningless numbers: there is an appropriate symbolism in the numbers of the Apocalypse. Twelve is used as the number of those who in every age have been called out to witness for some truth which the world needed. Thus the twelve tribes of Israel were the appointed witnesses of a pure theology and a pure morality in the days of idolatry and license; and later, the twelve Apostles became the inheritors of a similar, though higher, spiritual work in the world. The number twelve, then, stands for a world-witness of divine truth; and the fruits of this world-witness is a wide and sustained success; the twelve multiplied by the twelve a thousand-fold —"the native and not degenerate progeny of the Apostles apostolically multiplied" (Mede, quoted by Dr. Currey). The skeleton organisation is twelve, the college of the Apostles; the one hundred and forty-four thousand represent the growth into full numbers of the choice ones of God. (3) Does the change in the order and names of the tribes symbolise anything? The alterations are not without significance. They are briefly these: The tribe of Dan is omitted, and the name of Ephraim does not appear, but the number is made up to twelve by two representatives of Joseph: Manasseh, who stands sixth in order, and Joseph (superseding the name, but representing the tribe of Ephraim), who is placed eleventh on the list. The number twelve is maintained to show that in all changes God's purposes stand. The omission of one tribe and the changed name of another are designed to show that in the Church, as in Israel, the most splendid opportunities may be lost. Dan, once a tribe, and not an insignificant tribe, which had reared its heroes, gradually lapsed into idolatry and immorality, dwindled in numbers and importance, and at length disappeared, and as a tribe became extinct. Its omission in this list is a silent but emphatic comment on the sacred warnings: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Begin not to say, We have Abra-

tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Chap. vii. 9—17. The vision of victorious rest.

(9) After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the

---

ham to our father: God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Similarly, Ephraim, as has been suggested by a thoughtful writer, who exalted himself in Israel, is now lost in the greater name of Joseph. (Comp. Hos. xiii. 1; x. 11; Luke xviii. 14.) The order of the names is altered. Reuben no longer stands first: Judah has taken the first-born's place; and Levi, though named, does not occupy the third, the place of his birthright, but the eighth place. Here, again, the changes have their teachings. The unstable Reuben, with all his splendid advantages—the firstborn, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power—failed to hold his own among his brethren: the fatal instability of his character accompanied his history, and weakened his otherwise pre-eminent powers; yet weak and erring, the type of the brilliant and vacillating, he is not an outcast altogether, but finds place, and high place, among the servants of God. Judah, lion-like, resolute, and strong, wins the foremost place; from him springs the true Ruler, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to unfold the counsels of God, and to rule the world with a righteous sceptre. Levi's subordinate position is thought to be due to the fact that the Mosaic ritual and Levitical priesthood are at an end. This may be so; the changes are the result of the actual history of the tribes, and illustrate how in the Christian Church, as in the Jewish, privileges may be lost, opportunities seized or cast away, offices and functions used for a time, and then laid aside when their work is accomplished; but in all, and through all changes, God's unchanging purpose runs onward to its certain close. The grouping of the tribes is, as has been pointed out, in the order of closest kinship: "We find not one violent separation of those who are naturally united, where both are truly members of the Israel of God" (Rev. C. H. Waller, *Names on Gates of Pearl*).

(9) **After this I beheld . . .** —Better, *After these things I saw, and, behold! a great multitude which no one was able to number, out of every nation, and (all) tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands.* "A great multitude:" We have just had the picture of the sealing of a multitude which could be numbered: now we have the picture of a countless throng. Who are these? Are they the same as the one hundred and forty-four thousand, or are they others? Our answer must be that this vision gives the climax of the previous one. The sealing represented the Passover of the Church: this vision represents its Feast of Tabernacles. The sealing assured us that in the

throne, and before the | | Lamb, clothed with white

midst of the severe times of testing there would be those who, wearing God's armour, would come forth unscathed: this vision shows us the fruition of their labour and their rest after conflict. The sealing assured us that God's hidden ones would be safe in trouble: this tells us that they have come safe out of it—they are those who have come out of the great tribulation (verse 14). But how can the numbered of the one vision be the same as the numberless of the next? They are numbered in the first vision, as it is one of the assurances of their safety. In that vision the idea of their security in trial and danger is the main one. The servants of God are safe, for they are sealed and numbered; they are among those sheep of Christ whom He calls by name, whose very hairs are numbered; they are those whose reliance is not on self, but on their shepherd; and the sealing is the echo of Christ's words, "they shall never perish;" they are the servants of God, known by Him, and recognised by Him. But in the next vision, the expanding prospects of the Church and her final repose are shown to us. The idea of victory and peace, not so much safety in danger as freedom from it is set forth; and then countless multitudes are seen; the numbered are found to be numberless; countless as the sand by the sea and as the stars in heaven, they are yet in the reckoning and knowledge of Him who "telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names." The numbering must not be understood to imply limitation. We have seen that it is a number which symbolises expansive energy and extensive success; it implies the real security and wide-spread growth of the Church of God; it has no limits; it gathers from every nation and people; it welcomes all; where there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; its gates are open all night and all day to every quarter of the world—

> "From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
> Through gates of pearl stream in the countless host,
> Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
> Alleluia."

The multitude are clothed with white robes, and carry palm branches in their hands. It has been thought that these are the emblems of victory; they doubtless are tokens of a triumph: it is the sacred rejoicing of the Israel of God. The imagery is drawn from the Feast of Tabernacles: just as the sealing reminded us of the protecting sign on the lintels of the houses of Israel in Egypt, so do these palm branches and songs of joy recall the ceremonies of the later feast. No imagery would be more natural to the sacred seer, and none more appropriate to his subject. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated God's care over them in the wilderness, and their gratitude for the harvest. The people forsook their houses and dwelt in booths; the streets were full of glad multitudes who carried branches of palm, and olive, and myrtle; everywhere the sounds of rejoicing and singing were heard; "there was very great gladness" (Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev.

robes, and palms in their hands; [10] and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. [11] And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, [12] saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. [13] And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,

xxiii. 43; Neh. viii. 14—17). The vision here shows us a far greater feast. "The troubles of the wilderness are ended, the harvest-home of the Church is come," and God tabernacles (verse 15) among His servants.

[10] **And cried with a loud voice . . .**—Better, *And they cry with a loud voice, saying, The salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.* Their cry, uttered with a loud voice, is the acknowledgment that their salvation—the salvation which they now taste—is due not to themselves, but to their God and to the Lamb. The salvation here must, I think, be taken in its most comprehensive sense, including every deliverance—from the curse of law, from the power of sin, and from the perils of life. The explanation in verse 14 confirms this. (Comp. Gal. iii. 13; Phil. iii. 9.) This is "the voice of rejoicing and salvation which is in the tabernacles of the righteous," when the Lord, who is their strength and song, "has become their salvation" (Ps. cxviii. 14). Note the recurrence of "the Lamb." They are before the throne and before the Lamb; their salvation is ascribed to God, and to the Lamb.

[11] **And all the angels . . .**—Translate, *And all the angels were standing round the throne, and the elders, and the four living beings . . . . saying, Amen.* The great concourse of angels—those among whom there has been joy in heaven when a sinner has repented—now add their "Amen" to the cry of the redeemed, and then raise the seven-fold ascription of praise—

"Amen!
The blessing, and the glory, and the wisdom,
And the thanksgiving,
And the honour, and the power, and the strength,
(Is) unto our God
Unto the ages of the ages.
Amen!"

The seven-fold form of the doxology, which implies a divine completeness, is appropriate to this vision, which shows us the close of the Church's agony, and is in itself a slight indication that the view which would limit the seals to some short period of Church history is incorrect, as it is assuredly inadequate.

[13] **And one of the elders answered, saying unto me.**—The seer had asked no question, but the elder answers the wondering thoughts and questionings which fill his mind. Perhaps this

What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? (14) And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the

scene was in Dante's mind when he described himself in Paradise:

"Silent was I, yet desire
Was painted in my looks; and thus I spake
My wish more earnestly than language could."

—*Paradiso*, iv. 10–12.

The elder asks the question which he knows St. John would fain ask. *These who are clothed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?* The question brings *the white* robes into prominence. Is it, as has been suggested, that the wonder of the seer is excited more by the emblem of holiness and innocence than anything else? He recognises the multitudes as men and women out of every nation and tribe of sinful humanity, and he sees them clothed in the garb of holiness. Who are these countless throngs of holy ones?

(14) **And I said unto him . . .** —The form in which the answer of the seer is given shows how completely the elder had anticipated his thoughts; for he describes his reply as instantaneous. *And I have said, My Lord*—the language is that of reverent regard, but not of worship (see chaps. xix. 10 and xxii. 8, 9)—*thou knowest—i.e.*, it is for thee to tell me: thy knowledge and thy view-point is higher than mine; thou knowest: it is thine to speak, and mine to hearken.

And he said to me . . .— Read, *And he said to me, These are they who come* (the present tense is used: *these are those coming*) *out of* the *great tribulation.* They are those who come, not all at once, but gradually. The saints of God are continually passing into the unseen world, and taking their place among the spirits of just men made perfect. They come out of *the* great tribulation. Are we to limit the expression to the special and peculiar afflictions of the last great trial? There is no doubt about the emphasis which the definite article (unfortunately, ignored in our English version) gives: it is *the* great tribulation; but while there may yet be in store for the Church of Christ trials so great that they may be called, in comparison with those which went before, *the* great tribulation, it yet seems out of harmony with the spirit of the Apocalypse and the complexion of this vision to limit the phrase to some special season of trial. Is not the great tribulation the tribulation which those must encounter who are on the side of Christ and righteousness, and refuse to receive the mark of worldliness and sin on their heart, conscience, and life? In all ages it is true that we must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God; and the vision here is surely not of those who will come safe out of some particular trials, but of the great multitude from every age and every race who waged war against sin, and who, in the midst of that protracted conflict, endured the great tribula-

blood of the Lamb.
(15) Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne

tion which is to continue until Christ's return. *And they washed* (not "have washed," for the washing was done during their earthly life) *their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* The imagery is to be found in the Gospel and in the Epistle (John xiii. 8–11; and 1 John i. 7); its use here and in chap. i. 5 (if the reading *washed* is to be preferred to *loosed*) points to a common authorship: the emblem of the *blood which washes white*, or cleanses, is not used with such distinctness elsewhere in the New Testament. It is, in St. John's lips, but a following out of the twice-repeated words which he quotes from John the Baptist at the opening of the Gospel, when he proclaimed Christ to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In that Lamb of God those who came out of great tribulation found the forgiveness and the spiritual power which gave them confidence and hope in the midst of life's war and life's weariness; for the man who knows that he is forgiven and that he is being helped to holiness is the man who thinks no fiery trial strange, but rejoices in the knowledge that his salvation is of God.

(15) **Therefore are they before the throne . . .**—Better, *On this account are they before the throne of God—i.e.*, because they so washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Comp. chap. xxii. 14, where a well-supported reading is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life," &c.) They are before the throne; they are like Him, for they see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2), and *serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them.* The life is not simply one of joy or safety, it is one also of service. (Comp. chap. xxii. 3.) Those who were made priests to God here carry on their service in His temple; yet it is to be remembered that this can only be figurative language, for in the heavenly city there is no temple (chap. xxi. 22). It serves to teach us that the servant will find his fitting work of service there as well as here. *He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them.* It is worth noticing how persistently St. John keeps up the phrase, "He that sitteth upon the throne" (chaps. iv. 2; v. 1, 7, 13; vii. 10). *Tabernacle*, or dwell as in a tent: The rendering "shall dwell" among them does not do justice to this word, and at the same time obscures the allusion which the seer has in his mind. The allusion is to the Shechinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence, which rested over the mercy seat. "The idea that the Shechinah, the σκηνή (*skéné*), the glory which betokened the Divine Presence in the Holy of Holies, and which was wanting to the sacred temple, would be restored once more in Messiah's days, was a cherished hope of the Jewish doctors during and after the Apostolic ages." The expected and

shall dwell among them.[a] [16] They shall hunger no more,[b] neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. [17] For the Lamb

[a] Isa. 4. 5, 6.
[b] Isa. 49. 10; 65. 13.

wished-for glory would be seen among God's saints. God's tabernacle shall be with them (chap. xxi. 3), and with them so as to stretch over them: He will tabernacle over (or, *upon*) them. With this we may compare St. Paul's expression in 2 Cor. xii. 9 ("that the power of Christ may tabernacle"—"rest" in the English version—"upon me"), where Professor Lightfoot (whose words have just been quoted) thinks that there is a similar reference to the symbol of the Divine Presence in the Holy of Holies. (Comp. Isa. iv. 5, 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 27; and John i. 14.) There seems also to be a carrying on of the imagery derived from the Feast of Tabernacles: as there were the palm branches of the harvest joy, so there will be the booth, or tabernacle, of God's presence among them. He shall be their pavilion, their shelter. "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain."

(16) **They shall hunger no more . . .**—Better, *They shall not hunger any more, nor yet thirst any more; neither at all shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat.* The negatives are emphatic, and rise in force as the verse proceeds. None of the privations which they have endured for Christ's sake shall trouble them; none of the dissatisfactions and weariness of life shall afflict them; for hunger, thirst, and fatigue will be no more, for the former things are passed away (chap. xxi. 3, 4). And then, too, shall that blessed hunger and thirst—the hunger and thirst for righteousness—be appeased. Christ's benediction will then be realised in its fulness: Blessed are they who so hunger, for they shall be filled. And as they will receive inward strength and satisfaction, so also will they be kept from the outward trials which wear down the strength of the strongest. The sun shall not light on them: the Eastern sun, in its fierce and overpowering intensity, was a fit emblem of those trials which dry up the springs of strength. The sun, risen with a burning heat, devoured the beauty of the flower (Jas. i. 11); the rootless growth on the stony ground was scorched when the sun was up (Matt. xiii. 5, 6). Man's beauty of wealth and talent, man's resolutions of better things, all fade away before the testing beams of this sun; but the time of trial is past, the pains and temptations of life are over, the sun in that land will not scorch, for there is no longer need of these burning beams; the city has no need of the sun, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (chap. xxi. 23). No sun, and no heat, no burning hot wind like the sirocco, will spread withering influence there.

(17) **For the Lamb . . .**—Translate, *Because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall tend them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life* (or, *life-*

which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.[a]

[a] ch. 21. 4.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER VIII.—(1) And when he had

springs of waters); *and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.* The Lamb is described as "The Lamb in the midst of the throne." The writer told in chap. v. 6 that he had seen a Lamb in the midst of the throne. When he looked towards the throne, he saw the Lamb as the central object immediately in front of it. He who would draw near to the throne must pass the Lamb. The position which the Lamb held was one of significance, and is therefore repeated here. The Lamb will tend His people as a *shepherd* tends his flock (the word translated "feed" has this force), and will lead them to the springs of the water of life. The twenty-third Psalm rises at once to our minds. The Lord who was David's shepherd (Ps. xxiii. 2), who was the Good Shepherd who sought and brought home the lost for whom He died (Luke xv. 4; John x. 11), does not forget the shepherd's work in heaven. He who made His people to drink of the brook in the way (Ps. cx. 7), who gave to those who came to Him the water which alone would quench their thirst (John iv. 13, 14, and vii. 37—39), leads them now to the springs of the living water, and makes them drink of the river of His pleasures (Ps. xxxvi. 8). Significantly enough the springs of this living water are in the throne itself (chap. xxii. 1). Ezekiel saw the stream issuing forth from the Temple (Ezek. xlviii. 1), but in the city where there is no temple we are carried to the very throne of God, to find the well-spring of every gladness. In this emblem of the water we have another allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles. Among the ceremonies observed at the feast was that of the drawing water; the priest drew a vessel of water from the brook of Siloam, and poured it out in the temple-court by the altar of burnt offering, and the people sang the words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. xii. 3). Here the Lamb, who is also the High Priest, leads His people to the springs of the water of life. Joy, too, is theirs; for God shall wipe away every tear from (or, *out of*) their eyes (Isa. xxv. 8; Rev. xxi. 4). In Isaiah it is said God shall wipe away tears from off all faces: here it is every tear. Thus shall all sorrow be removed from all: no tears shall gather in any eye, for the sources of sorrow will be cut off in the land where there is no more sin. None can weep again when it is God who wiped away their tears. Blessed are they that mourn, said Christ—blessed indeed in this, that God becomes their comforter. Only those who have wept can enjoy this consolation. Who would not shed life's tears to have God's hand to wipe them away!

VIII.

(1) **And when he had opened the seventh seal . . .**—Trans-

Chap. viii. 1. The seventh seal opened.

opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of

late, *And when he opened the seventh seal there took place a silence in heaven as it were for half an hour.* It is greatly to be regretted that this verse should have been prefixed to this chapter. The section of the book with which it is connected is that which goes before, not that which follows. The second verse of this eighth chapter introduces a new series of visions: the first verse gives the close of the visions which follow the opening of the seals. But what is the meaning of this verse which describes a half-hour's silence in heaven? It is a disputed point whether the book, or *roll*, fastened with the seven seals (chap. v. 1, 2) is ever really unrolled to view. Some have thought that as each seal is opened a portion of the roll is displayed, unfolding the vision of the seal; others have regarded the visions as mere accompaniments of the opening of the seals, and quite distinct from the writing on the roll; those who take this view are disposed to think that the roll never is read, for that when the last seal is broken, and all are expecting to hear what is written in the book, no reading takes place, but only a silence ensues. It does not seem to me that this latter view is altogether tenable. It appears a singularly harsh interpretation to say that the contents of the roll are never disclosed. The book of God's purposes was seen in the hand of Him who sat on the throne. The Evangelist longed to know something of its contents; vain efforts were made to open it; the Evangelist wept with disappointment; he was then comforted in his sorrow by hearing that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had conquered to open the book; but then, after all this, not a line or word of the book, it is said, is ever revealed. The servant is waiting to hear the divine word; the seer is waiting to record what is unfolded; but though the seals are opened, we are told that the words he waits for never came. St. John himself gives no hint of so disappointing a conclusion. Later on (chap. x. 4) he is told not to record the utterances of the seven thunders, but there the concealing of the utterances is clearly commanded. Here he evidently associates the visions of the seals with the contents of the roll. It is only a spirit in bondage to foolish literalisms which will ask how the visions can be the writing in the roll. The book represents God's purposes and principles of His government in relation to the world-history: the seals show us some typical scenes in that world-history, and if not seen on the parchment of the roll, are yet unfoldings of principles and truths in the book. But it does not follow that all that is in the roll is ever unfolded. Such portions are made manifest as the seer could hear, and as the Church of Christ needed; and thus it may well be that the half-hour's silence is significant that all God's purposes and revelations are not exhausted—that there is something behind which it is not well that we should know—that prophecy as well as knowledge is partial. But the stillness of this half hour, if it reminds us of what

Chap. viii. 2—6. The vision of the seven trumpet angels.

half an hour. (2) And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

is yet untold, yet proclaims to us a time of deep, unbroken tranquillity, when the cries and groans of the earth, and even the grateful doxologies of heaven are hushed into calm. It is the silence which tells us that sorrow is ended, and eloquently tells us of heart peace. It is the rest of the troubled on the breast of God. All the earth, with her strife of tongues, is still; all the cries of men (chap. vi. 15), of trafficker and warrior, of struggling wise, and suffering good, are stilled; all flesh keeps silence before Him; He gives His people peace.

"O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men with wailing in your voices!
O delvèd gold, the wailer's heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved sleep."

Only those who have been carried away by an over-refined philosophy or morbid sentimentalism can see anything selfish in longing, out of earth's cares and injustices, for such a rest as this. It is surely not ignoble to pray—

"Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years;
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan."

(2) THE VISIONS INTRODUCED BY THE SOUNDING OF SEVEN TRUMPETS.—The series of visions which is now introduced extend to the close of the eleventh chapter. There are some features which may be noticed here. There is a marked correspondence of arrangement between these and the visions of the seals. As there, so here, there are introduced two subordinate visions towards the end of the series. The sixth seal was followed by the vision of the one hundred and forty-four thousand and the countless multitude: the sixth trumpet is followed by the vision of the little book and the seven thunders and the measurement of the temple of God (chaps. x. and xi. 1—14). The general intention of these interposed visions is similar. In both cases they seem designed to give us an insight of the life within the life of Christ's Church. The main visions give us more external aspects; the interposed visions show the inner and more spiritual aspects. Thus the seals show the great outer features of world and Church history—the war, controversies, the famine and barren dogmatism, the death and deathlike externalism, the persecutions and sorrows and revolutions of oncoming history; the interposed visions of chap. vii. show us the calm and strength and the victory of the children of God. So also with these visions of the trumpets. The main visions give us the trumpet-voices of God's manifold providences summoning the world to surrender to Him; the subsidiary visions point to the witness and work of the true children of God in this world, and the more secret growth of the Church of Christ. Another similarity between the seals and the trumpets is to be found in the separation between the first four and the last three. The first four trumpets, like the first

four seals, are grouped together. The first four seals are introduced by the cry "Come": the first four trumpets are followed by judgments on natural objects—the earth, the sea, the rivers, the lights of heaven—while the last three have been described as *woe trumpets*, being introduced by the thrice repeated cry of "Woe" (see verse 13). There is thus a correspondence of arrangement in the two series of visions; but their general import is very different. We reach in the seventh seal the eternal quiet of God's presence. Through a series of visions we have been shown that the way to rest is not easy, that we must be prepared to see the great features of earth's troubles remain till the close, and that the children of God must through tribulation and even persecution enter into the kingdom of God's peace. The seals answer the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom?" But the kingdom will be restored. The Church may find her way a way of difficulty, delay, danger; but it will be a way to triumph. The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of the Lord. Let the people of God go forward; let their prayers be set forth as incense; let them blow the trumpet, and summon men to repentance; they are not alone; the Lord still fights for His Israel. This is the assurance which we gather from the trumpets. In all the wondrous providences which the history of the world discloses we may hear the trumpet-voice which heralds the kingdom of Christ, to which the Church is bearing constant and sufficient witness (chap. xi. 3, 4). The seals close with peace; the trumpets close appropriately with victory (chap. xi. 15). The visions are not scenes of events which chronologically succeed one another. The one set shows us the way through trouble to rest; the other shows the way through conflict to triumph: the one set shows us the troubles which befall the Church because of the world; the other shows us the troubles which fall on the world because the Church advances to the conquest of the world, as Israel to the possession of the land of promise.

And I saw the seven angels . . .—Better, *And I saw the seven angels which stand* (not "stood") *before God; and there were given to them seven trumpets.* "The seven angels:" Who are these? The usual answer is that they are seven angels (or, according to some, *archangels*) distinguished among the myriads round the throne. The passages referred to in support of this view are two—one from the Apocryphal Book of Tobit, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One" (Tobit xii. 15); the other, the well-known passage from St. Luke, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God" (Luke i. 19). This may be true, and the emphatic article (*the* seven angels) gives the view some support, but seeing that the number seven is to be taken throughout the book as symbolical, and not literal, it is perhaps better to view the seven angels as representatives of the power of God over the world. They are the seven, the complete circle of God's power in judgment: for as we do not take the seven spirits to be literally seven spirits, but symbols of the

complete and manifest influence of the one Holy Spirit, the third person in the glorious Trinity, so neither need we infer from the mention of the seven angels here that they are literally seven pre-eminent angelic personages, but rather regard them as symbols of that complete and varied messenger-force which God evermore commands.

Seven trumpets.—It will help our understanding of the symbol here employed to recall the occasions on which the trumpet was used. It was used to summon the people together, whether for worship, or festival, or war, "for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." "When they shall blow with them (the trumpets), all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee (Moses) at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. x. 4—8). For journeying an alarm was to be blown (Num. x. 6). "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (verse 9). And as for war, so also on festival days the trumpets were blown: "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." The reader will remember other illustrations. When the people were assembled to hear the Ten Commandments the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder (Ex. xix. 19). The feast held on the first day of the seventh month was "a day of blowing the trumpets" (Num. xxix. 1) among the people who would blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed on their solemn feast day (Ps. lxxxi. 3). At the siege of Jericho seven priests bore before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns, and on the seventh day the priests blew with the trumpets (Josh. vi. 4, 5). For assembling, for journeying, for war, the sound of the trumpets was heard. The judgments which follow the blowing of the trumpets in this series of visions are the trumpet-toned calls of God, summoning mankind to assemble to the true tabernacle, bidding His people go forward, and announcing the overthrow of His adversaries. Every judgment, on earth, or sea, or river, by war, or by invasion, is a call which bids men listen to the still small voice, which they have neglected, perhaps resisted. Every judgment should rouse the true servant to greater vigilance and further advance: it is an alarm sounded on the great battle-field of life. Miracles have been called the alarm bells of the universe; no less are the strange and startling events of the world's history the alarm notes blown by God's angels across the world, to remind us of the war in which every citadel of evil must inevitably fall. It is mainly, then, as an alarm of war that these angel-trumpets are sounded. The land of promise is to be rescued from the tribes and peoples who corrupt it. As the Canaanites of old were swept away lest their wickedness, increasing beyond measure, should spread abroad a moral death, so are the

(3) And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer

judgments of these trumpets sent to undermine, purge away, and finally to destroy all evil powers which destroy the earth (chap. xi. 18). We may hear, then, in "each blast of the symbolical trumpet a promise and instalment of the victory" for which the groaning and travailing creation yearns, and which will be the banishment of earth's destroyers, and the manifestation of the sons of God.

(3) **And another angel came and stood at** (or, *over*) **the altar, having a golden censer.**—The appearance of this other angel has given rise to some questioning, and some strained explanations. Some have thought that by this other angel we are to understand Christ Himself. This is very doubtful: the designation "another angel" (see chap. vii. 2) is against this view. There is really no need to ask who the several angels are: the book is symbolical. The angels are not particular personages, but symbolical of those agencies — whether personal, or natural, or supernatural—which are employed by Him who sitteth on the throne. The angel stood at the altar. The altar mentioned in chap. vi. 2 corresponded with the altar of burnt sacrifice, which stood in the open court in front of the tabernacle or temple. The symbolism of the Apocalypse being so largely built up out of Jewish materials, we need not be surprised to find the altar of incense introduced here. This altar was of gold, and was situated in the holy place. Here the priest was wont to burn incense, while the people outside were praying. We have an example of the custom in the history of Zecharias (Luke i. 8—11). The scene described by St. Luke bears a close resemblance to this, and gives a key to the symbolism. The prayers of the people and the smoke of the incense are ascending together. The angel has a golden censer. The word here rendered censer is used sometimes for the incense, but the epithet "golden" shows that it is the vessel to hold the incense which is intended. The censer is of gold, as was the altar, and as are so many things in the Apocalypse. (See chaps. iv. 4; v. 8; xv. 6, 7, and xxi. 15, 21.)

And there was given unto him much incense . . .—Literally, *And there was given to him much incense that he might* (not "offer it with," as English version, but) *give it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.* The incense was to be mingled with the prayers of the saints. The incense was added to give a fragrance to the prayers of the saints, and render them acceptable before God. The action of the angel has been spoken of as though it might give countenance to the erroneous doctrine of the mediatorship of saints and angels. It is only when we persist in viewing symbols as literal facts that there is any danger of such an inference. Dogmas, whose only foundation is in the incidental symbolism of a

it with the prayers[1] of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. (5) And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into[2] the earth:

[1] Or, *add it to the prayers.*

[2] Or, *upon.*

prophetic book, are ill-grounded. It is a safe canon that doctrinal inferences from metaphors are always to be suspected. The angel here is a mere symbol of a divinely-appointed agency. No personal angel actually ever did what is described here: how could incense mix with prayers? The whole is symbolical of the truth that the prayers of all the saints need to be rendered acceptable by the infusion of some divine element. The best prayers of the best saints are weak, and polluted and imperfect at the best. The incense which is added to the prayers is not supplied by the angel: it is first given to him, and he then mingles it with the prayers of all saints. It is hard to forget here Him whose offering and sacrifice became a savour of sweet smell (Eph. v. 1, 2). The altar is described as the golden altar—*i.e.*, the altar of incense, as noted above. It is well for us to remember Dean Alford's caution that we must not attempt to force the details of any of these visions into accordance with the arrangements of the tabernacle. "A general analogy in the use and character of the heavenly furniture is all that we can look for" (Alford, *in loco*).

(4) **And the smoke of . . .**— Better, *And there went up the smoke of the incense for* (or *to, i.e.*, designed for, and to give fragrance to) *the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel before God.* The emblem of the rising column of smoke, in which incense and prayer now mingled, is the token that the prayers of the saints now rendered acceptable, and no longer premature, are about to be answered. These prayers of God's people, weak and imperfect as they are, are yet invincible weapons in the hands of Christ's soldiers, and will be found mightier than any carnal weapons. As Jericho fell without Israel needing to strike a blow, so now the Israel of God will be seen to be omnipotent through true and faithful prayer. The charter of the Church's power is in the words of Christ: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). The judgments that follow are not indeed specifically prayed for by the Church of Christ, but they are the results of their prayers, and prove the might of all prayer.

(5) **And the angel . . .**— Translate, *And the angel has taken* (or, *took*) *the censer, and he filled it from the fire of the altar, and cast it* (*i.e.*, the fire or hot ashes which filled the censer) *upon the earth.* The prayers have gone up, and the sprinkling of the ashes earthward is the symbol of the answer descending from heaven. We may recall the similar action of Moses before Pharaoh, when he

and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

(6) And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared them-

took ashes of the furnace and sprinkled it towards heaven, but it descended towards earth as a symbol of the plague about to fall upon the land (Ex. ix. 8—10). The hot ashes are the tokens of the coming judgments. As in the parallel vision in Ezekiel (chap. x. 2), when the man clothed with linen is bidden to "go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the doomed city;" so here the ashes fall—the judgments are at hand.

And there were voices . . .—Or, *And there took place thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.* There is some variety among the MSS. in the order of the words here used. Some place "lightnings" before "voices." These signs and sounds herald the approach of judgments. God has arisen in answer to the cry of His people. "The earth shook and trembled. There went up a smoke and a fire: coals were kindled at it. At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them: He shot out lightnings and discomfited them . . . He delivered me from my strong enemy" (Ps. xviii. 4—19). It is a solemn thought that we may send up prayers, and the answer may come down a judgment; for often it is only through judgment that true lovingkindness can make her way.

(6) **And the seven angels** . . .—Translate, *And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves that they might sound.* The angels raised their trumpets to their mouths, ready to blow. The sounding of the trumpets introduced the series of startling events (or providences, as we sometimes call them) which serve to arrest men's attention, and remind them that there is a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Such events are landing-stages in the great advancing progress of Christ's kingdom. It may be well to remind those who are desirous of actual and limited historical fulfilments which correspond with the features of the several visions, that the aim of the visions seems to be to give the seer, and through him the Church at large, some idea of the general kind of events which ever mark the decay of the kingdom of wrong and the growth of the kingdom of our Lord. It is to this consummation the visions of the trumpets lead us. We are to see the destruction of those who destroy the earth, and the establishment of the kingdom of Him who will reign in righteousness (chap. xi. 15—18). This great consummation is to be achieved by slow and painful steps. "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom?" is the question answered by the seals. "How

selves to sound. (7) The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all

Chap. viii. 7—12. The first group of trumpet-visions. Four angels sound their trumpets.

wilt thou restore the kingdom?" is the question answered by the trumpets. In both cases the answer is similar. These great results are not and cannot be attained in the quick ways human impatience would suggest. The history of the world is not to be folded up in a hurry, for that history is a development and a discipline; it is not only the consummation which is to be desired; the steps to that end are salutary, though painful. The chastisement which is not joyous, but grievous, may be the best means of bringing to the world the peaceable fruits of righteousness;—

> "And man, unfriended, faltering on the way,
> Must learn to weep before he learns to pray."

And this wholesome lesson of tears must be taught the world, in the slow and bitter progress of a human history marked not by one judgment but by many. The fulfilment, then, of these prophetic visions is not exhausted in one event, however nearly its features may correspond with the character of the vision.

(7) **The first angel . . .**— Better, *And the first sounded, and there took place hail, and fire mingled in blood, and it was cast upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.* The reference to the Egyptian plagues is obvious: "There was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous . . . and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field" (Ex. ix. 23—25). This resemblance to the history of Israel in Egypt gives us the hint of the true meaning. It carries us back to the past, and asks us to remember the mighty works of God in old times. It reminds us that He who bade Joshua cause the trumpets to be sounded by the walls of Jericho, and who delivered His people from the tyranny of Pharaoh, is the same God, mighty to save His people, to break the fetters of ignorance, and to cast down the high walls of pride and sin. But it is needful to observe the variation as well as the resemblance. This plague differs from the Egyptian in the introduction of *blood*. This variation carries it out of the possibility of literal interpretations. We begin to think of the strongly figurative language of Joel: "the blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" (Joel ii. 30); and we call to mind that St. Peter announced that the fulfilment of this prophecy of Joel commenced with the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit. Then the war-trumpet of deliverance had been sounded; then the process of the earth's emancipation had begun; then commenced the series of sorrows and judgments which the obstinate love of men for darkness rather than light would bring upon themselves; and

green grass was burnt up. [8] And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; [9] and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life,

through the operation of these the kingdom of Christ would be established. The first judgment falls upon the trees and grass. Beneath its touch the grass withereth, the flower fadeth. Thus the day of the Lord is upon the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; upon every one that is proud and lofty (Isa. ii. 12, 13; and 1 Pet. i. 24). It matters little in what way this humbling of human pride takes place. The world is full of illustrations. The loftiness of Jerusalem was lowered when the weakness of her self-sufficient religiousness was revealed and her Pharisaic pride was exposed; the loftiness of Rome was humbled when the Gothic invaders, like a storm of hail (so they were described by Claudian), devastated the empire. These are illustrations; but the prophecy is for all time, for the day of the Lord is upon "all that are proud." We must not press the phrase "the third part" too closely; it clearly is designed to remind us that in wrath God remembers mercy, and that while He humbles all He does not utterly destroy. (Comp. Zech. xiii. 8.) Is this the baptism of fire which withers the florid, pretentious, but fruitless religions of mankind?

[8, 9] **And the second angel . . .**—Translate, *And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures that were in the sea died, those which have lives; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.* The sea becoming blood reminds us again of the plagues in Egypt (Ex. vii. 20, 21); but we must once more note the variation. It is not an uplifted rod like that of Moses which produces this result: it is the casting into the sea of a huge mass, as it were a great mountain, burning with fire. Professor Stuart calls this image appropriate or peculiar to St. John. The prophet Jeremiah, however, in a chapter which in many particulars is parallel to this and the following chapter (comp. Rev. xi. 18), makes use of a very similar image: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain" (Jer. li. 25). The mountain was the emblem, in Jeremiah's prophecy, of the strong consolidated power and institutions of Babylon. Not only must the loftiness of man be brought low, but the mountains which they made so strong for themselves. The power of God's advancing cause would hurl the rooted mountains from their base. The power of faith, Christ declared, would suffice to do this (Matt. xxi. 21); and it is at least a singular coincidence that this

died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. (10) And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and

saying of the Lord's respecting the overthrow of a mountain should occur in His own comment on the destruction of the fig-tree, just as, in this chapter, the vision of the mountain overthrown follows that of the destruction of tree and grass life. Our Lord encourages the faith of His disciples: "Your power will not only expose the pretentious religionisms of the world, as My word has shown the worthlessness of this tree, but you will overthrow also the long-established usages, and evil customs of nations which corrupt the world." The powers which seemed strong as the great mountains would be seen to be but evil powers, burning, poisoning, destroying; but its power to destroy is checked: it is cast into the sea. Yet no great institution, or nationality, or evil principle is overthrown without some corresponding disadvantages. The falling mountain carries evil even in its fall, the sea becomes blood, the ships are destroyed. The fall of a great nation—a Babylon—is always fraught with unavoidable miseries to the world and its nations. Doubtless, the interests of commerce and shipping suffer; but this is not, it seems to me, the point of the vision. The symbolism is only weakened by supposing an allegorical mountain to fall into a literal sea and to destroy literal ships. The force of the vision is that certain gigantic forms of evil will be overthrown, but the overthrow will be accompanied with the development of new evils: the advance is made, but the step forward unveils the subtle force of evil. Every corrupt institution is destroyed with the risk of the evil elements diffusing themselves elsewhere; just as the political victory of Christianity was followed by the infusion of certain Pagan elements into the Church. The vanquished always manage to impose some laws on the victor. Even the advance of the Church is accompanied by some such experience.

(10) **And the third angel . . .**—Translate, *And the third angel sounded, and there fell out of the heaven a great star burning* (or, *kindled*—the light is not inherent, but borrowed) *as a torch* (or *lamp*—same word as in chap. iv. 5), *and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the springs of the waters.* The flaming star seems to symbolise the fall of a potentate; the trumpet-blast proclaims that the mighty who have been as luminaries, admired, and perhaps worshipped, will fall. The advancing progress of Christianity is to be marked by many such a fall. The rulers of earth, burning with lust of conquest or with pride of fanaticism, will be plucked from their elevated seat among the stars (Obad. verse 4); but their fall is unfortunately accompanied, as in the last instance, with many miseries to others. The fountains and rivers are smitten, the sources of health and joy, the streams of prosperity, are injured.

upon the fountains of waters; [11] and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. [12] And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as

[11] **And the name of the star.**—Translate, *And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many of mankind died from the waters, because they were embittered.* The bitter, nauseous plant known as wormwood (*apsinthos*) is used to represent troubles and calamities. In Jer. ix. 15 we have an example of this: "Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink." It is worth noticing that the Israelites are warned against idolatry as "a root that beareth gall and wormwood" (Deut. xxix. 18); and we may recall the symbolical act of Moses, who ground the golden calf to powder, cast the powder in the brook, and made the children of Israel drink (Ex. xxxii. 20). Some have thought that this falling star signified some false teacher, whose evil influence poisoned the pure currents of the gospel, and perverted the minds of men of original genius, who are represented here as fountains. The passages cited above favour the thought, and it may be included in the general meaning of the vision; but the main point seems to be to give us hints of those stages which will mark the advance of Christianity. The fall of the great men, the rulers and leaders, will take place, and their fall will bring misery to mankind. Doubtless, the appearance of false teachers in the Church is one of the evidences and an unavoidable accompaniment of a progressing faith (Matt. xiii. 26). But all such false lights shall fall before Him who is the true Light and Morning Star, and who will heal all embittered waters of life. (Comp. Ex. xv. 23 and 2 Kings ii. 19.)

[12] **And the fourth angel.**—Translate, *And the fourth angel sounded, and there was smitten the third part of the sun, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them might be darkened, and the day might not appear as to its third part, and the night in like manner.* The dimness which thus falls on the lights of heaven carries us back to the plague of darkness (Ex. x. 21—23); but yet there is this difference; there the children of Israel had light in their dwellings while all the rest of the land suffered the darkness that might be felt; here, however, the darkness is only such as results from the withdrawal of the third part of the light of the sun by day, and of the moon and the stars (so much more brilliant and needful in Eastern lands than in our own) by night. It is a day of the Lord, in which the light is not clear nor dark—not day nor night

the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. (13) And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Chap. viii. 13. The eagle of warning.

(Zech. xiv. 6, 7). There will be periods in which the lights which guide men will give forth uncertain glimmers; upon the earth there will be distress of nations, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken (Luke xxi. 25, 26). Such times of darkness and sorrow there necessarily must be. It is through seasons such as these, when the lights of human wisdom and of spiritual guidance seem alike obscured, that the Church must go forward. The chaos precedes creation, and it is through chaos again that the Church of Christ must pass to the new heaven and new earth. These trumpet-visions, if read by the side of the story of Genesis, seem like the undoing of creation; the vegetation is smitten, the earth and sea are intermingled, the lights of the heavens are darkened, the living things in seas and streams are destroyed; but

> "Fresher life the world shall draw
> From their decay."

The pulling down must of necessity precede the building up; the removing of the degenerate is one step in the way to the regeneration which follows.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAST THREE, OR WOE, TRUMPETS. AN EAGLE UTTERS THE THREEFOLD WOE.

(13) **And I beheld . . .**—Better, *And I saw, and I heard a single eagle* (not "angel," as in English version) *flying in mid-heaven, saying with a mighty voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell upon the earth by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!* The best MS. authority is against the reading "angel," and in favour of *eagle*. It is, then, an eagle, a solitary eagle that moves across the heaven, and utters the warning Woe! It flies through the meridian sky, and is thus visible to the very horizon. It was an appropriate emblem: high-soaring as the spirit of the seer, the eagle-glance scanned the borders of the earth, and caught sight of the coming troubles, and gave warning; swift and strong as the judgments of God, its very form gave emphasis to the warnings of its voice (Deut. xxviii. 49; Hos. viii. 1; and Matt. xxiv. 28). And yet the emblem must bring to the minds of God's children the care of Him who led Israel, instructed him, and kept him as the apple of His eye, and cherished him as "an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young,

CHAPTER IX.— (1) And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. (2) And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the

A.D 96.

Chap. ix. 1—12. The fifth trumpet. First woe.

spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, and beareth them on her wings" (Deut. xxxii. 11). Is it not also a precursor of those eagle-like judgments which fall upon the carcase of dead nations or a dead society?

IX.

The resemblance in arrangement of the visions of the trumpets and the visions of the seals has already been noticed; but the warning cry, Woe, woe, woe! has no parallel in the seals. The trumpets which follow are fraught with woe and judgment to the dwellers upon the earth.

(1) **And the fifth angel . . .** —Translate, *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star out of the heaven fallen* (not "fall," as in English version; the seer saw not a falling, but a fallen, star) *upon the earth.* The emblem of a fallen star is used elsewhere in the Bible. Isaiah (chap. xiv. 12) speaks of Lucifer fallen from heaven. Christ described Satan as lightning falling from heaven. Some great power or ruler is represented, then, by this fallen star. He is, moreover, said to have fallen from heaven, and he is represented as having been given the key of the abyss. Does not this lead us to expect the working of some evil spirit and diabolical agency? The 11th verse confirms our expectation. We may compare chap. xii. 8—12, where Satan is described as defeated, cast down to the earth, and filled with wrath. To understand this fallen star as the representative of a good angel seems hardly possible.

And to him was given . . . —Literally, *and there was given to him* (*i.e.*, to the being represented as a fallen star) *the key of* (not "the bottomless pit") *the pit of the abyss.* The abyss is the same word rendered "the deep," in Luke viii. 31, where the demons besought our Lord not to send them into the abyss, or deep. It is the word which describes the abode of the evil spirits. The verse before us suggests the picture of a vast depth approached by a pit or shaft, whose top, or mouth, is covered. Dante's *Inferno*, with its narrowing circles winding down to the central shaft, is somewhat similar. The abyss is the lowest spring of evil, whence the worst dangers arise. (Comp. chaps. xi. 7; xvii. 8; xx. 1—3.)

(2) **And he opened . . .** —Translate, *And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun was darkened, and the air by reason of the smoke of the pit.* The first result of the opening of the pit is the diffusion of such a dense smoke that light and atmosphere are darkened. In the previous vision there was an obscuration of light arising from the smiting of the luminaries; in

smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

(2) And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the

this the obscuration arises from causes external to the luminaries. In that the light-giving power was enfeebled; in this the light is not enfeebled, but hindered. This must be remembered. The interpretation of these visions is most difficult; but we must bear in mind that they are descriptive of that great war which the Church is waging with the world, which good is waging with evil, but the end of which, we are assured, is the victory of good. The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of His Christ (chap. xi. 15); but during the progress of the war the issue will often appear doubtful: nay, even the triumph may seem to be in the hand of the enemy; but faith disregards the back-flowing waves, for she knows the tide is coming in. We have seen that the advance of Christianity is marked by the manifestation of evils as well as the establishment of good. Christianity does not create evils, but the very intense honesty of her principles reveals the hidden force of unsuspected corruption. Thus the faith of Christ is come to give light unto the world, but in her progress many lights fall — the false lights of world-power, world-wisdom, false religionism, and heresies. The enemy, too, is at work, and seeks to obscure her light by the diffusion of dark and low-born thoughts. The smoke of the pit blackens the light and confuses the atmosphere. Now, this obscuration is surely the diffusion on earth of evil thoughts and ideas, the spirit of falsehood and hate, hostility to truth, and enmity against God and man. The bright, clear air made gladsome by the sun is darkened; "all forms that once appeared beautiful become hideous."

(3) **And there came . . .**— Better, *And out of the smoke there came forth locusts upon the earth; and there was given to them power, as the scorpions of the earth* (? land-scorpions) *have power.* The outcome of the gloom is the power of devastation and pain. We still have reference to the Egyptian plagues—this time to the locusts (Ex. x. 12—15): "They covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened." Similarly, Joel describes the darkening of the land through the plague of locusts (Joel ii. 3—10): "The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." But the locusts of our vision are armed with the power of scorpions, to sting and to torture (verse 5): the scorpions are called scorpions of the earth. Some have thought that this expression is equivalent to land-scorpions, in contradistinction from so-called sea-scorpions. This hardly seems likely or necessary. Their power to torment men is the prominent idea. The locusts are not literal locusts: this scorpion-like power given to them is enough to convince us of this, even if the next verse did not clearly show it. The scorpion-like power seems to

scorpions of the earth have power. (4) And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. (5) And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment

depict a malicious energy, as the locusts depict a devastating multitude.

(4) **And it was commanded . . .**—Translate, *And it was commanded them that they shall not injure the grass of the earth, nor yet any green thing, nor yet any tree; but only* (or, *except*) *the men whosoever have not the seal of God on their foreheads.* The locusts which are sent not to injure the vegetation are clearly not literal locusts, and the security of those who have the seal of God in their foreheads (those who were described as sealed, and so assured of safety against the tempest blast: see chap. vii. 1—3, *et seq.*) may confirm us in this view. Whatever the plague be, it is one which cannot injure God's children. "Nothing," Christ has said, "shall by any means hurt you. I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke x. 19). It is interesting and suggestive to notice that this promise of our Lord was given immediately after the saying, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," as the safety of the sealed ones is mentioned here after the vision of the star fallen from heaven. The coincidence is hardly undesigned; at least, the sense in which we understand the danger from which Christ promised His disciples protection may afford us a guiding meaning here. Now, none have maintained that Christ promised His disciples entire freedom from danger, pain, and death. He said, "They shall persecute you and kill you; ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." No real injury can happen to them; pain and death might be encountered, but all things work together for their higher good. They have a joy which no pain or peril can take away; they have a joy in this (it is the same chapter as above—Luke x.), that their "names are written in heaven." For such, death has no sting, the grave no victory. They meet famine and nakedness, and peril and sword; but in these they are more than conquerors. No plague can hurt those who have the seal of God in their foreheads. A plague from which those whose way is through tribulation are exempt can hardly be a physical one.

(5) **And to them . . .**—Better, *And it was given to them that they should not kill them* (*i.e.*, those who had not the seal of God in their foreheads), *but that they should be tortured five months.* The general period of a locust plague is about five months: "as the natural locusts commit their ravages only for five months, so the ravages of

was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. (6) And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. (7) And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and

these symbolical ones will be only for a short period" (Stuart). Their power is to inflict torment, and not death. The next verse tells us that men would consider death preferable to this torment; but the relief of the grave is denied them.

And their torment . . .— Literally, *and the torture of them* (*i.e.*, the torture inflicted by them) *is as the torture of a scorpion when it has stricken a man.* The wound of a scorpion occasions intense suffering: we have in it the symbol of the malicious cruelty of the merciless. The emblem is used in Ezekiel: the rebellious and malicious opponents of the prophet being compared to scorpions (Ezek. ii. 6). We may compare the similar imagery of the bee for the Assyrian power (Isa. vii. 18), and the Psalmist's complaint that his enemies came about him like bees —a swarm irritating him with wing and sting. The tenth verse tells us the way in which the injury was inflicted: there were stings in their tails.

(6) **And in those days . . .**— Translate, *And in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and they shall yearn to die, and death flees from them.* The change of tense from the future ("shall seek—shall yearn") to the present ("death flees") gives graphic force to the description. Men will seek for death in vain; they will long to die, and lo! death is seen fleeing from them. We can see an age in which death will be regarded as a sweet respite from the tormenting trials of life: men will stretch out their hands to death as to a welcome deliverer; but behold! death is seen fleeing from them. The word translated "desire" in our English version is a strong word; it has been rendered *vehemently desire:* it is a passionate longing, as the yearning of the soul after one we love. There have been ages in which men have thus pined for death, in which light and life seem but mockeries to the miserable, and men "long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures" (Job iii. 20, 21). Such times are those which have been well called reigns of terror.

(7) **And the shapes . . .**— Translate, *And the shapes* (or, *forms*) *of the locusts were like horses made ready for war.* The resemblance of the locust to the horse (especially in the head) has been remarked upon by travellers, and has found expression in the Italian and German names *cavalletta* and *heupferd.* The resemblance is more distinct when the horses are made ready for battle; the hard shell or scales of the locust having the appearance of armour. Hence it has been thought that the sacred writer here alludes to this horse-like appearance of the locust. It seems a little doubtful that this is the case, or

their faces *were* as the faces of men. [8] And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions. [9] And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. [10] And they

that in this or any of the descriptions here there is any reference to the anatomical features of the locust. (See Note on verse 10.)

And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.—Here again there has been a desire to find some physical appearance in the locust to suggest the crown of gold; the antennæ, the rugged elevation in the middle of the thorax, have been imagined to have some resemblance to a crown; and the face of the locust, it has actually been said, bears under ordinary circumstances a distant (the adjective is most needful) resemblance to the human countenance.

[8] **And they had hair . . .** —Translate, *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions, and they had breastplates as iron breastplates; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of* (having, *i.e.*, drawn by) *many horses, running to war.* The hair: It is said that some locusts are hairy, and the passage in Jeremiah (chap. li. 27) has been quoted as evidence (the rough caterpillars here spoken of being said to be "locusts bristling with hair"), but the application of the passage is uncertain: the rough caterpillar may be the locust in the third stage, when the wings are still enveloped in rough horny cases which stick upon their backs. Others think the idea of the woman-like hair has its basis in the antlers of the locust. The teeth like those of the lion is a description the origin of which is found in the prophet Joel, in his prediction of the locust plague: "a nation cometh upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth (or, *grinding-teeth*) of a great lion." The terrible destructiveness of the locusts, and their strong, ceaseless, and resistless voracity, were thus described. Their breastplates are taken as descriptive of their thoraxes, which in the vision seemed strong as iron. The comparison of the sound of the wings to the thunderous sound of chariots and horses rushing into battle is repeated from Joel ii.

[10] **And they had tails . . .** —Better, *And they have tails like to scorpions, and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.* In this verse the secret of their power is mentioned: they have tails like scorpions' tails, and stings which wound and so cause agony to men. On the period of five months, see verse 5. In the exposition of this passage it is utterly vain to look for features of the ordinary natural locust corresponding to the several particulars set forth by the sacred seer; this is admitted even by those who seem anxious to find such counterparts. "We must regard the comparison

had tails like unto scorpions, and there were | stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt

as rather belonging to the supernatural portion of our description." The rule is a good one. Like the description of the Divine Presence in chap. 4, most of the visions of the book are incapable of pictorial realisation without incongruities which would be grotesque and profane; nor need we be surprised, since the principles and truths are the main points with the writer. This general rule must be kept in mind if we would avoid the danger of dwelling too much on the bearing of details. It is not in the locust that we shall find even the suggestive basis of the details in the description here. The smoke rises from the pit of the abyss; the heaven is darkened, and out of the smoke emerges the pitchy cloud of locusts. The seer then adds certain characteristics of this locust plague, partly drawn from the earlier prophets, but, as his custom is, with some original additions. They are locusts, but they have the malice of scorpions; they advance like horse-soldiers to battle; they wear crowns; they bear a resemblance to men; there is something womanlike also in their appearance, and in their voracity they are as lions. The exigencies of the symbolism are quite beyond the features of the ordinary locust; the sacred writer shows us a plague in which devastation, malice, kinglike authority, intelligence, seductiveness, fierceness, strength, meet together under one directing spirit, to torment men. Some parts may be purely graphic, as Alford says, but surely the vision shows us a great symbolical army multitudinous as locusts, malicious as scorpions, ruling as kings, intelligent as men, wily as womanhood, bold and fierce as lions, resistless as those clad in iron armour. The symbolism of course must not be pressed too closely, but its meaning must be allowed to widen as new elements are added, especially when those elements are not suggested by anything in the locust itself, but are additions clearly designed to give force to the symbol employed. The locust-like army has characteristics partly human, partly diabolical, partly civilised, partly barbarous. They have been variously interpreted: the historical school have seen in them the Saracens under Mohammed, who gave to them a religion which was "essentially a military system;" others are inclined to refer them to "the hordes of Goths and others whose unkempt locks and savage ferocity" resemble this locust host. There is a good ground for taking the vision to prefigure the hosts of a fierce invading army. Even those who believe that Joel's prophecy foretold a plague of literal locusts, yet acknowledge that these "may in a subsidiary manner" represent "the northern, or Assyrian enemies of Judah" (Introduction to Joel, *Speaker's Commentary*). But, as the writer there says, these were "themselves types of still future scourges;" so may we see here a vision which neither the history of the Zealots, nor that of Gothic hordes, nor of Saracens, have exhausted, but one which draws our thoughts mainly to its spiritual and moral bearing, and teaches us

men five months. [11] And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name

that in the history of advancing truth there will come times when confused ideas will darken simple truth and right, and out of the darkness will emerge strange and mongrel teachings, with a certain enforced unity, but without moral harmony, a medley of fair and hideous, reasonable and barbarous, dignified and debased, which enslave and torment mankind. The outcome of these teachings is oftentimes war and tyrannous oppression; but the sacred seer teaches us distinctly that those who hold fast by the seal of God are those who cannot be injured, for he would have us remember that the true sting of false conceptions is not in the havoc of open war, but in the wounded soul and conscience. Nor is it altogether out of place to notice (by way of one example) that the power of Mohammed was more in a divided and debased Christendom than in his own creed or sword; the smoke of ill-regulated opinions and erroneous teachings preceded the scourge. Here, as in other parts of the book, we may notice that subtle, plausible errors pave the way for dire troubles and often sanguinary revolutions. Falsehoods and false worships that have been diffused over the world become "the forerunners and foretellers of a conflict between the powers of good and evil." Yet as the trumpet sounds we know that every battle is a step towards the end of a victorious war.

[11] **And they had a king . . .** —Better, *They have over them as king* (not "*the* angel," as in English version) *an angel of the abyss; his name* (is) *in Hebrew Abaddon, and in the Greek he has a name, Apollyon.* There is more than one point in which the seer wishes us to mark the contrast between these symbolical and the natural locusts. Locusts have no sting; these have. Locusts have no king (Prov. xxx. 27); these have a king. The movements of the invading locusts are conducted with wonderful precision and order, yet no presiding monarch arranges their march; but here there is a directing and controlling head. The great movement is no mere undesigned or instinctive one, but the offspring of a hidden, spiritual force. The great battle is not on the surface only, the invasions, revolutions, tyrannies, which try and trouble mankind, involve spiritual principles, and are but tokens of the great conflict between the spirit of destruction and the spirit of salvation, between Christ and Belial, God and Mammon, the Prince of this world and the Prince of the kings of the earth. The king of these locust hordes is named in Hebrew Abaddon, or Perdition, a name sometimes given to the place or abode of destruction (Job xxvi. 6). "Destruction (Abaddon) hath no covering"—*i.e.*, before God. (Comp. Prov. xv. 11.) In Greek his name is Apollyon, or Destroyer: The Spirit of the destroyer is the spirit that inspires these hosts. It is a great movement, but its end is destruction, as its inspiring genius is from beneath, from an angel of the nether world. It is not necessary for us to seek some great historical per-

in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.[1] (12) One woe is past; *and* behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

[1] That is to say, A destroyer.

Chap. ix. 13—21 The sixth trumpet. Second Woe.

(13) And the sixth angel sounded, and

sonage for the fulfilment of this portion of the prophecy, any more than we ought to accept any great historical event as an exhaustive fulfilment of the vision. The picture is vivid and forcible, and its full and certain meaning will be plain hereafter; but it at least should draw our minds from the curiosity which seeks for historical or personal counterparts to the self-vigilance which fears lest our own spirit should be injured by the prevalence of any form of evil. It should teach us to remember always the vehement, earnest way in which the sacred writers describe the subtle, venomous power of all sin, and the merciless destructiveness of its work. It is not of any invading hosts, or signal and special forms of evil, but of the terrible and usual influence of all sin, that the Apostle St. Paul writes when he describes the world-wide devastations of sin in language partly borrowed from the Old Testament, but singularly reminding us of the vision before us. "There is none that doeth good: no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; the poison of asps is upon their lips; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. iii. 12—18). It is perhaps well to notice that at this fifth trumpet the unseen spiritual powers of darkness appear taking part in the conflict. There is a time when the obstinate resistance of mankind (yes, and of individual men and women also) to better things becomes fortified by an evil spirit, and they are no longer passive resisters of good, but they become active antagonists of good, hating and obscuring the light of truth, and wounding the spirits and consciences of men. Alas! many walk of whom the Apostle could only say with tears, "they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (the emblem of salvation), "and whose end is destruction" (Phil. iii. 18, 19).

(12) **One woe is past . . .** —Better, *The one woe has passed; behold there cometh* (the verb is in the singular) *yet two woes after these things.* Here is the patience and faith of the saints. The troubles which pass only yield place to more, the rest and the victory are not yet; the powers of evil have not exhausted themselves, the iniquity of the social and spiritual Amorites is not yet full.

(13) THE SIXTH TRUMPET—THE SECOND WOE TRUMPET.—The first point which will strike the reader is that the plague under this trumpet resembles the last, though it is one of much more aggravated nature. Again we have vast hosts, with the powers of the horse, the lion, and the viper, at command, but the destructive elements are increased, the multitudes are more

numerous, the horses' heads grow lion-like. With the mouth breathing forth threatening and slaughter, as well as with the tail armed with deadly fangs, they can deal forth, not torment only, as in the last vision, but death itself, to a vast proportion of the human race. To aid in this new desolation new forces are released: the four angels bound near the Euphrates are loosed. The next point to notice is that, even more directly than before, we are reminded that the moral and spiritual aspect of these visions should claim our thought. The aim of the plague is to exhibit the death-working power of false thoughts, false customs, false beliefs, and to rouse men to forsake the false worships, worldliness, and self-indulgence into which they had fallen (verses 20, 21). The Psalmist has told us that great plagues remain for the ungodly. Here, whatever special interpretations we may adopt, is an illustration of the Psalmist's words. The enemy against whom these foes are gathered is the great world lost in false thoughts, luxurious ways, dishonest customs; that world which in the very essential genius of its nature is hostile to goodness and the God of goodness. But the hosts which come against this sin-drowned world are not merely plagues, as famine and pestilence, they are plagues which are the results of the world-spirit, and are to a great extent, therefore, the creation of those who suffer. For there are evils which are loosed upon the world by the natural action of sin and sinful customs. As the evil spirit mingled for the first time in the plague of the fifth trumpet, so from all quarters (typified by the *four* angels) new powers of misery arise. Nor must another feature be overlooked: the historical basis of the Apocalypse is the past history of the chosen people; God's dealings with men always follow the same lines. The Apocalypse shows us the same principles working in higher levels and in wider arena. The Israel of God, the Church of Christ, with its grand opportunities, takes the place of the national Israel. Its advance is against the world, and the trumpets of war are sounded. Its progress is, like Israel's, at first a success; it gains its footing in the world, but the world-spirit which infects it is its worst and bitterest foe; it becomes timid, and seeks false alliances; it has its Hezekiahs, men of astonishing faith in hours of real peril, and of astonishing timidity in times of comparative safety, who can defy a real foe, but fall before a pretended ally, and who in mistaken friendliness lay the foundation of more terrible dangers (2 Kings xx. 12—19). The people who are victorious by faith at Jericho lay themselves open by their timid worldliness to the dangers of a Babylonish foe. The plague which falls on the spirit of worldliness does not spare the worldliness in the Church. The overthrow of corrupted systems bearing the Christian name is not a victory of the world over the Church, but of the Church over the world. He who mistakes the husk for the grain, and the shell for the kernel, will despair for Christianity when organisations

altar which is before God,
(14) saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four

disappear; but he who remembers that God is able to raise up even of the stones children to Abraham, will never be confounded; he knows the vision may linger, but it cannot come too late (Heb. ii. 3). With all this section the prophecy of Habakkuk should be compared, especially chaps. i. 6—11, 14, 15; ii. 1—14; iii. 17—19. The history of Israel is in much the key to the history of the world.

And the sixth angel . . .— Translate, *And the sixth angel sounded: and I heard a* (single) *voice out of the* (four) *horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel, him who had the trumpet* (or, *O thou, who hast the trumpet*), *Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.* There are one or two verbal points worthy of notice. The Sinaitic MS. omits the words "single" and "out of the four horns," and thus reads, "I heard a voice out of the golden altar." It was the same altar from which the incense ascended mingled with the prayers of the saints. (See chap. viii. 3.) Where the prayers were, thence the voice comes. It reminds us that the prayers are not ineffectual, that still they are heard, though the way of answering may be in strange and painful judgments. The voice is heard as a single voice out of the midst of the horns of the altar. It is very doubtful whether the word "four" ought to be retained. The voice is represented as rising from the surface of the altar, at the corners of which were the four projections known as horns. The command is to loose the four angels bound at the Euphrates. What are these? Their number—*four*—represents powers influencing all quarters. They are angels (that is, *messengers*, or *agencies*) employed for the purpose. They are at or near the river Euphrates—that is, the spot whence the forces would arise. What is meant by the Euphrates? Are we to understand it literally? This can hardly be, unless we are prepared to take Babylon and Jerusalem literally also, and to deny all mystical meaning; but this is what only few will be disposed to do. The two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, are the types of two radically different sets of ideas, two totally antagonistic views of life; and the meaning and mystical import of the River Euphrates must be determined by its relation to these two cities. It has been, indeed, argued that we are not bound to take the name Euphrates mystically because the remainder of the vision is mystical, since in Scripture we often find the literal and the allegorical intermingled. For example, there is an allegory in Ps. lxxx. 8 and 11, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," &c. It is quite plain that the vine is used mystically to represent Israel; but the word Egypt is not mystical—it indicates the literal fact that out of Egypt Israel was brought. This is no doubt true, but it hardly meets the question here. No one will dispute that a distinct, literal fact or name may be introduced in a passage otherwise allegorical; but do we ever meet with a passage

angels which are bound in | | the great river Euphrates.

in which names of places are introduced, some of which were to be taken literally and some mystically? And such would be the case here. The whole tenor of the Apocalypse keeps before us Jerusalem, the temple, and its surroundings (chap. xi. 1, 8), and Babylon, with its might and opulence, as two opposing cities; and it is out of all scriptural analogy to interpret Jerusalem allegorically, and Babylon allegorically, and then to claim the privilege of understanding Euphrates literally. In fact, the inconsistency and arbitrariness of interpreters is tested by these three names, Babylon, Jerusalem, Euphrates. Some will have Jerusalem to be literal, and Babylon and Euphrates mystical; others will have Babylon mystical, and Jerusalem and Euphrates literal. Surely those who hold all three to be literal are more consistent. But if Babylon be mystical and Jerusalem mystical, it is hard to see why Euphrates should not be so also. I am far from denying that those who consistently hold all three to be literal may not be right. There are not wanting tokens that a revival of the East may change the whole political centre of gravity of the world; but no such literal fulfilment would annul the infinitely more important mystical aspect of the Apocalypse. The conflict between a literal Babylon and a literal Jerusalem either in the past or the future can never vie in interest with the prolonged and wide-spread conflict between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of Belial, between God and Mammon, which is waged along the whole line of history over the arena of the whole world, and plants its battle-ground in every human heart. In every man, and in the whole world, the war is waged, as the carnal and spiritual contend with one another. It is in this war between the mystical Jerusalem and the mystical Babylon that the great river Euphrates is to play an important part. Twice (here and in chap. xvi. 12) the river Euphrates appears, and each time in connection with some warlike demonstration or invasion. The basis of interpretation, as with Jerusalem and Babylon, must be sought in the history of Judah and Israel. Babylon is the great foe of Israel, and the Euphrates was the great river or flood which formed a natural boundary between them. "The other side of the flood" (*i.e.*, Euphrates) was the phrase which pointed back to the early life of Abraham before he had entered upon the life of pilgrimage and faith; the Euphrates was the rubicon of his spiritual history. The Euphrates was the great military barrier also between the northern and southern nations; it occupied a place similar to the Rhine and the Danube in modern history. The advance of the Egyptian army to the banks of the Euphrates threatened the integrity of the Assyrian empire (2 Kings xxiii. 29). The battle of Carchemish established the supremacy of the Chaldean power to the west of the Euphrates (2 Kings xxiv. 7); such a preponderance of Babylonish influence threatened the safety of Jerusalem. The loosing of the

(15) And the four angels were loosed which were prepared for an hour, [or, *at*] and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

four angels (or *powers*) bound at the Euphrates can only signify changes analogous to disturbances on the great frontier line, as the drying up of the Euphrates signifies the annihilation of the protecting boundary. Such a frontier line between the spiritual city and the world city does in practice exist. There is a vast stretch of intervening territory which neither the Church nor the world really possesses, but over which each desires to possess power. There is a great neutral zone of public opinion, civilised habits, general morality, which is hardly Christian, hardly anti-Christian. When Christianised sentiments prevail in this, there is comparative peace, but when this becomes saturated with anti-Christian ideas, the Church suffers; and it is out of this that the worst aspects of trouble and danger arise; for out of it arise those forces which bring into acute form the great war between the world spirit and the spirit of Christ. The loosing of these four angels, then, seems to indicate that the issues at stake have become more distinct; that the conflict which has gone on under veiled forms begins to assume wider proportions and to be fought on clearer issues. The issues have been somewhat confused: the world spirit has crept into the Church, and against the world spirit, wherever found, the trumpet blast declares war.

(15) **And the four angels . . .** —Better, *And there were loosed the four angels who had been made ready unto* (or, *for, i.e.*, ready for) *the* (not "an hour," but *the*) *hour, and day, and month, and year, that they should slay the third part of mankind.* The English version reads as though the hour, day, month and year were to be understood as the length of time over which this plague of war should last. This idea has been adopted by many of the historical school of interpreters, and great ingenuity has been exercised to find some period which exactly corresponds with this, and during which disastrous wars prevailed. But the expression ("made ready unto the hour," &c.) is not to be taken to imply that such was the duration of the plague; it implies that the loosing of the angels would take place at a definite period, the year, month, day and hour of which were known; the expression corresponds somewhat with our Lord's words, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man." It reminds us that there is a period —an unknown period, but nevertheless a certain period—at which the latent powers of retribution wake and begin to avenge themselves, at which the restraints which have withheld the long-deserved scourges are removed. Men and nations little think of this. Peace, they cry, where there is no peace, for they have been by their sins mining the ground under their feet, or dwelling in that abode of false security which Bunyan might have called the city of Meanwell, and that abode is built on the sands; and when the angels

(16) And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. (17) And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire

---

of judgment are loosed, and the restraining influences of public opinion broken, the tempest is abroad, the frail house of formal religion falls, and the time of testing leaves its inmates unsheltered. Happy only are they who are ready for the hour of the Lord's return. The angels are made ready that they should kill the third part of mankind. The way in which this slaughter is to take place is explained in verses 17, 18: it is a wide and devastating slaughter carrying away a large portion of the human race.

(16) **And the number . .** — Translate, *And the number of the armies of the cavalry was two myriads of myriads. I heard the number of them.* The writer heard, perhaps from some herald angel, the number of this vast army of horsemen; it was twice ten-thousand times ten thousand—*i.e.*, two hundred millions. The number is like an echo from Ps. lxviii. 17—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand (*two myriads*) even thousands (or, *thousands of thousands*) of angels." This utterly bewildering number might have been sufficient to keep interpreters from looking for some slavishly literal fulfilment: it simply stands for an immense host, and may serve to point out the prolific powers of retribution—the harvest of sin is misery, multiplied thirty, sixty, one hundredfold.

(17) **And thus I saw . . .** — Better, *And after this manner saw I the horses in the vision, and those who sat upon them, having breastplates fiery and jacinth-like, and brimstone-like, and the heads of the horses were as heads of lions; and out of their mouths goeth forth fire and smoke and brimstone.* The seer proceeds to describe the general appearance of the horses and horsemen. After this fashion were they: the horses and horsemen were armed with breastplates of triple hue (corresponding to the threefold destructive stream which goes forth from their mouth), the hues of flame, and dark purple (jacinth), and brimstone. The jacinth colour seems to be the dark purple or blue so often seen in smoke. The Poet Laureate uses the word "azure" to describe the colour of ascending columns of smoke ("azure pillars of the hearth arise to thee"): the colour here would be darker, the smoke not arising from peaceful dwellings, but generated among death-giving elements. The army is mainly of horsemen, and they are described as resolute and relentless: we are reminded of somewhat similar features in the Chaldean armies spoken of by Habakkuk, "I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation: they are

and smoke and brimstone. (18) By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. (19) For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. (20) And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood:

[a] Ps. 115. 4 & 135. 15; Isa. 46. 7; Jer. 10. 5; Dan. 5. 23.

terrible and dreadful: their horses also are swifter than leopards," &c. (Habak. i. 6—10).

(18) **By these three . . .**— Better, *From these three plagues were the third part of mankind slain, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which goeth forth out of their mouths. For the power of the horse is in their mouth, and in their tails, for their tails were like serpents, having heads, and with them they hurt* (or, *injure*). The destructive power in this vision is in mouth and tail, in the last trumpet-vision it was in the tail only (verse 10). The devastating power is increased; the foes come swift as horsemen, strong as lions, venomous as serpents, breathing forth elements that blind and burn with deadly power. We have, then, forces which are mighty, malicious, and relentless, and which are bidden forth against mankind for their sins of worldliness. (See verses 20, 21.) It is not once only in the history of the world that such powers have been let loose. The desolations wrought by invading hordes—the force and ferocity of Turkish power establishing itself in Europe and threatening the power of Christendom—the widespread terror and slaughter promoted by the outbreak of the spirit of unrestrained violence in France, followed by reckless war, may illustrate such a vision as the present; but the main teaching of it is the never-failing truth that the spirit of worldliness provokes its own punishment, wherever it may exist, and its retribution is in a form which serves to reveal what latent power of destruction lurks behind every sin, and what hidden spiritual foes there are to intensify human passions and to increase human misery.

(20, 21) **And the rest . . .**— Translate, *And the rest of mankind who were not slain in these plagues did not even repent of* (or, *out of*—*i.e.*, so as to forsake) *the works of their hands, that they should not worship the demons* (evil spirits), *and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they did not repent of* (or, *out of*) *their murders, nor of* (or, *out of*) *their sorceries, nor out of their fornication, nor out of their thefts.* These verses make one or two points clear. First, they show us that, whatever the nature of the plagues might be, they were afflictions designed to

which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: [21] neither repented they of their murders, nor of their

bring about repentance, and to rouse men, whether nominally Christian or not, from the lethargy into which long indulged sin had plunged them. Those terrible revolutions which are the growth of years, and which startle men with their apparent suddenness and violence, are the great appeals of God, asking men to see the meaning of sin; they are the trumpet blasts calling to repentance. But we are told more: the remainder of the godless did not repent. We are not, indeed, told that they did not feel terror, or remorse, or momentary qualms and misgivings, but that they did not show that which alone is regarded as genuine repentance, the repentance out of sin, the repentance which turns away from sin. We need always that wholesome caution. We need it most in times when hysterical and emotional religionism is fashionable, and it is forgotten that true repentance is a repentance whereby we forsake sins. These men repented not out of their sin. And their sins are enumerated, and the enumeration again takes us back to the history of Israel as to the historical basis which the sacred seer enlarged and vivified; for the sins are just those against which Israel was warned and into which Israel fell (Deut. iv. 28; Ps. cvi. 34—40; Acts vii. 41). The sins are demon-worship and idolatry: "They served idols: they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils" (Comp. 1 Cor. x. 20; 1 Tim. iv. 1.) It is needful to trace these sins in the history of Israel, as it has been argued that these are heathen sins, and that therefore these plagues must be plagues which fall on those who are literally heathens. But if we bear in mind that the series of visions describe features which will accompany the advance of Christianity in the world, we shall remember that it is against worldliness, wherever found, idolatries of whatever kind, murders and thefts, called by whatever name, that the true genius of Christianity makes war. Christ is king, and king of righteousness, and in righteousness does He make war, and the heathenisms which are called Christianity are as much the objects of His displeasure as the most obvious Paganism. It is needful to remember that Jews are addressed as if they were heathen, aye, very *habitués* of Sodom (Isa. i. 10), and that the Christian Church is warned against sins which are little else than idolatries. Covetousness, the very essence of worldliness, is by St. Paul twice over called idolatry (Col. iii. 5, and Eph. v. 5). It seems, therefore, to be foreign to the purpose to try and limit these plagues only to the non-Christian world. To do this is to get a narrow, improbable (may we not say an impossible?) interpretation; for the greatest strength of the world-power would be left untouched. It is true that the visions are not showing us the plagues which fall on apostasy and fornication within the Church; but it is true that we are beholding visions which show how terribly the world-spirit avenges itself on all

sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

A.D. 95

CHAPTER X.—(1) And I saw another mighty angel

Chap. x. 1—11. The little book.

who harbour it, whether called Christian or not. Gross sins, gigantic frauds, complacent familiarity with crime, followed by blunted moral sense, are heathenish, whether found in Pagan or Christian society. Heavy woes must inevitably await the society which tolerates such works; but the worst omen of the coming doom is seen when society has lost the power to repent because it has lost the power to hate evil. Such an incapacity is invariably significant of advanced moral decay. It is the climax in the growth of sin which the Psalmist noticed where men lose the sacred abhorrence of evil (Ps. xxxvi. 4). To such repentance is becoming impossible.

X.

The Interposed Visions. The Witness against Evil (chaps. x. 1—xi. 14).—As between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals there was interposed a two-fold vision—the sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand and the glimpse of the great multitude (chap. vii.)—so is a two-fold vision interposed here between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. The similarity of situation of these interposed visions (episodes, as they have not very accurately been called) suggests that there must be some corresponding value in their interpretation. This appears to be found in the answer to the question which rises spontaneously as the visions of the seals and of the trumpets draw to a close. We see the scenes which the seals disclose, and we learn how war, pestilence, death, persecution, revolution, are to continue, and we ask, What becomes of the Church, the bride of Christ? Where are the true servants of God during these trials? We are answered by the interposed visions of the seventh chapter that they are sealed, and they will be safe. Similarly, the scenes disclosed by the trumpets are spread before us, and we see the features which mark the advance of Christianity in the world; we see the pain, the confusion, the devastations and slaughters, the bringing to light of hidden evils, which are the necessary accompaniments of this prolonged war; we see, as it were, amid smoke and flame and sword, the advancing and receding line of battle, and we learn that the powers of evil are subtle and self-multiplying, and, like the dragon in the den of error, leap into new and multiform life, though smitten by the sword of the Red Cross Knight. And amid these confusions of war we almost lose sight of the Church, or gain only a few hints which show that she is not unharmed in the conflict; and again the question is forced from us, What becomes of the Church, the bride of Christ? Where is her work and the tokens of her advance? To this the interposed visions of the present section are designed to give an answer; and that answer is again a reminder to us that the work of God in the

come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of

world is not work on the surface of history merely: the waves catch the eye, and men measure progress by the force of these, but the ebb of the tide is unseen. So also is there a work of God which is more potent than the conspicuous work on which men love to look. The work of the Church is not to be measured by results now. It does achieve results, but her best work is the work of which she knows not now but will know afterwards; and there is a Church within the Church which is carrying on this work. There are witnesses of God against the beast-power and the world-power, who, though persecuted, are faithful — though dying, live — though chastened, are not killed; who, through evil report and good report, triumph over faithlessness and fear.

The interposed vision is two-fold. In the first part, contained in chap. x., another mighty angel descends with a little book open in his hand. This book the sacred seer, as the type of all those who will witness truly for God in the world, is commanded to eat; from sweetness it turns to bitterness, in token that the very fidelity and love he had to God would be the occasion of sorrow, for he would have to be the witness of unpalatable truths to the potentates of the earth; but he has heard celestial thunders, and he knows that the end and victory are near. Such is the preparation of him who will be a true witness for Christ when many false witnesses and false Christs are abroad. The second part expands the same thought under different imagery. There is a holy of holies in the Church, where the true witnesses are lightened with celestial fire for their work of noble peril.

First Scene of the Interposed Vision.

(1, 2) **And I saw . . .**—Translate, *And I saw another mighty angel descending out of the heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the* (not "a") *rainbow upon his head, and his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and having in his hand a little book* (or, *roll*) *open.* Many have thought that this angel can be none other than Christ Himself. It must be acknowledged that the description is such that we might well hesitate to apply it to any but our Lord; but nevertheless, the words, "*another* mighty angel," afford serious difficulty. Our Lord might indeed appear as an angel, but it is scarcely conceivable that He would be called "*another* mighty angel:" an expression which seems to associate this angel with those others who have taken part in these visions. Remembering this, we must separate from our thoughts the idea of personal angelic beings. Such are employed by God, but in the mechanism of these visions the angels are not necessarily such, any more than the stars are literal stars: they are typical, representative angels, as we speak of the Angel of Peace, the Angel of War; so we

fire: (2) and he had in his hand a little book open: | and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left

have the Angels of Time, of Death, of Life, as in the Apocalypse. The angel here, even if he does not represent Christ Himself, descends with the evidences of Christ's power. He comes to remind the secret ones of God that Christ is with them always, and that He will not hide His commandments from those who are living as strangers and pilgrims upon earth (Ps. cxix. 19; 1 Pet. ii. 11); for he bears a little book open in his hand. The value of this vision is best seen by calling to mind the vision of the Fifth Trumpet. There, for the first time, the plagues seemed to gather supernatural power: the key of the abyss was given to the star that fell, and the locust host were led by the angel of the abyss. As an answer to this comes this angel, bearing the witnesses of Christ's power. When the troubles come that darken and confuse, the messenger from heaven will come to give light, teaching, and strength to the faithful—so does this angel first give assurance of the power of Christ. He comes clothed with a cloud, the token always of the Divine Presence (Ex. xiii. 21; Ezek. i. 4; Matt. xvii. 5; Acts i. 9). *The*, not "a" rainbow, but the rainbow (*i.e.*, the rainbow of chap. iv. 3), the token of covenant and of love, glowed round his head; his face, like Moses', had caught the unutterable light, the sun-like light of Christ's presence (chap. i. 16); and his feet were like pillars of fire to tread the earth, strong in the power of purification and judgment. Some call this the Angel of Time, because of his utterance in verse 6; but is it not rather the typical representative of the Angel of the New Testament, coming with the tokens of covenant truth, and power and love? He had in his hand a little book open. Our memories are carried back to the other book, or roll, displayed in chap. v. 1—5, and two contrasts strike us: that roll, or book, was sealed, and none were found worthy to open it; this book is open—that book was larger; this one being described as a small book. Do these contrasts help us to the meaning? One thing they seem to tell us: the book contains none of those secret things which were the contents of the former book. The closed, sealed book pointed to the hidden springs of future history; this points to what is open to all. That book was comparatively large, and filled with writing, as the visions of oncoming history were great; this book is small, and contains what all may master. These considerations forbid the idea that the book is a repetition in brief of what was in the sealed book, "or that it was the revelation of some remaining prophecies," or of some "portion or section of prophecy." The vision is a representation that he who comes armed with the witnesses of Christ's presence comes also with that ever open proclamation of God's love and righteousness. The little open book is that gospel which is the sword of the Spirit, the weapon of the Church, that Word of God, open to all, hidden only from those whom the god of this world hath blinded. The fallen powers may bear the

foot on the earth, [3] and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven

key, and let loose darkening clouds of confused thought and unworthy teaching; the outer courts of the Church may be overcast; but unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, and God's Word has risen with new light and power upon the bewilderments and glooms of the age. "Three books are associated in the Apocalypse. The first is the book of the course of this world (chap. v. 1); . . . the last is the Book of Life (chaps. xx. 15; xxi. 27) . . .: between these two comes" another book, which is the link between the other two, the ever open book of God's promises and the witness of God's righteousness and power. Elliott regarded this little roll as the Bible opened anew to mankind at the period of the Reformation. The period affords many magnificent illustrations of the vision, but it does not exhaust its truth, since in every age the reverent study of the Word of God has given freshness and strength to forgotten truths, and has saved men from the bondage of traditional notions. From among such students have arisen God's witnesses.

And he set . . . .—The attitude of the angel, with one fiery foot planted on the sea and the other on the land, is that of a conqueror taking possession of the whole world. There is a power, then, by which the Church and children of God may possess the earth. It is not the power of pride or worldliness. The true weapons are not carnal: the sword of the Spirit is the word of God, and the meek-spirited (meek to be taught, and meek in life) shall possess the earth.

[3] **And cried with a loud voice . . . .**—Better, *And he cried with a loud voice, even as a lion roareth.* Another token of the presence of Christ with the Church. The voice is the voice of a courage and strength derived from Him who is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah."

And when he had cried . . . .—Translate, *and when he cried, the seven thunders* (notice, not "seven thunders," but "*the* seven thunders") *spake their own voices.* The thunders are called the seven thunders, to bring them before us as another order of sevens, and into harmony with the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven vials. Thus we have four sets of sevens It was not a seven-fold peal of thunder, but seven thunders which spake forth distinctly their own voices. This marked language brings the seven thunders, though their utterances are never revealed, into prominence as a portion of the Apocalyptic system. But what were these thunders? Were they more terrible judgments still? and did the sealing of them signify the shortening of the days of judgment, as Christ had said (Matt. xxiv. 22)? It may be so. One thing seems certain—the guesses which have been hazarded (such as that they are identical with the trumpets; that they are the seven crusades) can hardly be admitted. Whatever they were, they were perfectly intelligible to the Evangelist. He was on the point of writing down their utterances. Will this fact help us to understand

thunders uttered their voices. (4) And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (5) And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, (6) and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who

---

the general object of their introduction here?

(4) **And when the seven . . .** —Translate, *And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write: and I heard a voice out of the heaven, saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders spoke, and write them not.* He could have written down their utterances. It was no mere thunder-like sound he heard: the thunders spoke; and he would have continued his writing as he had been commanded (chap. i. 11), had not the voice out of heaven forbidden him. The utterances, then, are for those who hear them; they are not to be made generally known. Is it not the solemn, sacred, divine voice not to be known by all, but by those who have ears to hear when "the God of glory thundereth?" "Lo! He doth send forth His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice" (Ps. lxviii. 33). Mankind may hear the thunder; only those whose ears God has opened can hear the utterances and the inspiriting messages which they bring. So was it once in our Lord's life. The people said it thundered; some thought an angel spake; but there were articulate words which He who came to do God's will, in whose heart was God's law, heard, and to Him that thunder-like voice promised to "glorify His name" (John xii. 28, 29). Similarly here, the Evangelist (who is in this but a type of the true witnesses for God), who is to prophesy before peoples and kings (verse 11), hears words spoken by the divine voice which make him strong for his mission. It is so evermore. Dull ears there are who hear thunder, but never God's voice; dim eyes there are which see no trace of the divine craftsman in all nature, though—

> "Earth's crammed with God,
> And every common bush aglow with Him."

The thunders are not to be written down; they are for those who have ears to hear.

(5–7) **And the angel . . . .**— Translate, *And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted his right hand to the heaven, and sware in* (or, *by*) *Him who liveth unto the ages of the ages, who created the heaven, and the things in it, and the earth, and the things in it, and the sea, and the things in it, that time* (*i.e.*, delay, or postponement) *should no longer be: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, whenever he is about to sound* (his trumpet) *was finished the mystery of God, as he evangelised his servants the prophets.* There is a change of tense which sounds strange: he says, then (not "will

created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: [7] but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

be," but) *was* finished. In thought he hurries on to the end, and sees the close no longer in the dim future, but as, with the eye of God, an accomplished fact. The certainty is guaranteed with an oath. The gesture of the uplifted hand to give emphasis to the oath is of ancient date. Thus Abraham expressed his resolution to take none of the spoils of the conquered kings: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord . . . that I will not take from a thread to a shoelatchet" (Gen. xiv. 22; comp. Ex. vi. 8, margin). So, too, does the man clothed in linen (Dan. xii. 6—9, a passage which, in much, is the foundation of the one before us) lift up both hands and swear that there shall be a fixed period for the accomplishment of the scattering of the power of the holy people. The oath in the passage under consideration is to the effect (not that time should cease and eternity begin, but) that there shall be no longer any delay. The suffering saints had cried, "How long?" (chap. vi. 9—11), and they had been bidden to wait a little time. Now the close of all such waiting time is announced: when the seventh trumpet shall have blown, the mystery of God will be finished. "'The mystery of God' does not mean something which cannot be understood or explained. It is never applied to such matters, for example, as the origin of evil, or the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. It does mean a secret; but then a secret may be told, and when told is no mystery. The mystery or secret of God means, therefore, the whole of His plan and of His counsel concerning this earth in its present state of discipline, and of imperfection; all that God means to do upon it and towards it, even till that which we read of as the time of the end (Dan. xii. 4—9), the close of this last dispensation, and the introduction of that new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (Dr. Vaughan). No wonder, as he announced this fast approaching close of the ages of suffering and trial, he should add, "According as He (not "declared"—an utterly inadequate word—but) *evangelised* —*i.e.*, according to the glad tidings which He had ever proclaimed to and by His servants the prophets."

A somewhat remarkable parallelism between this passage and 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, has been pointed out. In both passages there is reference to the *mystery*, the *glad tidings*, and the *last* (the seventh trumpet is also the last) *trumpet*. This harmony of reference—taken in connection with St. Paul's statement, "We shall not all sleep, but we

(8) And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. (9) And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*,[a] and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. (10) And I took the

[a] Ezek. 2. 8. 3. 3.

shall all be changed"—is full of interest, if it were for nothing more than to notice the union of thought between the two Apostles; but it may also throw light upon the teaching respecting the first resurrection (chap. xx. 5, 6; but see Note there).

(8, 9) **And the voice . . .**—Translate, *And the voice which I heard out of the heaven* (I heard it) *again talking with me* (it is not the angel that speaks, but the voice which had bidden him seal up the thunders is heard again speaking), *and saying, Go, take the roll* (or, *the little roll;* there is a difference in the MSS.) *which is opened in the hand of the angel, who stands upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went away to the angel telling him to give me the little book. And he saith to me, Take and eat it up; and it shall make bitter thy belly, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.* The image of eating the roll is derived from the Old Testament. We meet with it in Ezekiel (chap. iii. 1—3) and Jeremiah (chap. xv. 16). The passage in Ezekiel is probably the basis of the present passage, and the chapter in which it occurs gives us the meaning of the symbol: the eating of the roll, or the words of the roll, is the complete mastering of the contents of the book—the digesting, as we say, its meaning, till the principles and truths are thoroughly familiar and loved. "All my words" (so runs the explanatory verse, Ezek. iii. 10) "that I shall speak unto thee, receive in thine heart and hear with thine ears." It is similar to the Psalmist's practice: "Thy words have I hid within my heart;" he made himself so familiar with them that they were no longer a code of laws, but a constant instinct, a second nature to him. Thus pre-eminently should he be familiar with his Master's words and heart, saturated with his Master's principles, who is to be a witness and a prophet for his Lord. "He who would carry God's words to another must first be impressed and penetrated with them himself. He must not only bear, read, mark, and learn, but also (according to the Scriptural figure) inwardly digest them."

(10) **And I took . . .**—The Evangelist takes the roll, as he was bidden, out of the angel's hand, eats it up, and finds it, as he was told, "in his mouth as honey, sweet." In this, his experience resembles that of Ezekiel, who found the roll in his mouth as honey for sweetness (Ezek. iii. 3). So the Psalmist could rejoice in God's words and God's law as

little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:	and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (11) And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again

sweet, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb (Pss. cxix. 103, and xix. 10). He who is ready to endure bitterness in his fidelity to God must not only be interpenetrated by divine teaching; he must have also realised its sweetness, or else, however pleasant his words may sound, they will lack the sweetness which is as needful to the words of the teacher as to the songs of the poet. But the after effect of the sweet-tasting roll is bitterness. Ezekiel makes no mention of this bitterness; yet we know how much his fidelity to the words he loved so well must have cost him when he was bidden to arm himself with a flinty determination (Ezek. iii. 9—14, and ii. 6, 7), and the patient courage of one whose lot was among thorns and briars and scorpions. It must always be so. The love of Christ may constrain men, but the very ardour of their affections must bring them through tribulation, and may make them as outcasts, defamed, persecuted, slain. The flaming zeal to emancipate mankind from thraldoms, follies, and ruinous sins may stir the soul with a holy joy; but there come moments when men are almost tempted to turn back, and to think that they have undertaken a hopeless task, when they find how slow is their progress, and what new and unexpected difficulties arise. Such was the bitterness which Moses felt: "Why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all." The most enthusiastic souls who love their fellowmen, and who feel how sweet and high is their calling, perhaps feel most of this bitterness. Their very love makes all failure very bitter to bear; yet is it through this martyrdom of failure that the noblest victories are won.

(11) **And he . . .**—Better, *And they* (not "he," as in the English version, but *they say:* an equivalent for "It was said,") *say to me, Thou must again prophesy concerning* (or, *with regard to*) *peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings many.* He is told that the bitterness will arise in connection with his prophecies with regard to peoples and kings. This carries us on to the vision in the next chapter, where the two witnesses stand so solitary, and prophesy so mightily, yet so vainly, among men. He will have to tell the story of churches and peoples, priests and princes, unmindful of their high calling and their allegiance to their true king, and of their hatred of God's mightiest and purest witnesses. The end, indeed, will come. The Church will be victorious. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ: but it will be through persecutions, apostacies, judgments. This is the sad vision he must describe. The interposed visions will answer the question

before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

A.D. 96

CHAPTER XI. — And there was given me

Chap. xi. 1—14. The witnesses.

"What has the Church been doing?" but it will show how she has done that work, distressed by heresies, crippled by worldliness, trodden down by enemies, and, worse than enemies, foes veiled as friends. But this very vision will lead to the unfolding of the more truly spiritual aspects of the Church's work, and of that conflict in which she contends with the multiform spirit and power of evil. Thus will he prophesy of peoples and kings many.

XI.

THE SECOND PART OF THE INTERPOSED VISION. THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE; THE TWO WITNESSES; THE EARTHQUAKE.

THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE. —We enter upon the second part of the interposed vision. The Temple proper is secured. The measuring signifies its protection from profanation; the outer court given to the Gentiles indicates that practical heathenism and corruption have invaded the Church; against corruptions and profanities, witnesses, who draw their strength from divine help, are raised up to protest. Their power is great, though their witness is disregarded; for their influence outlasts their life, and their words avenge themselves on their adversaries; rejected reformation reappears as revolution. The vision therefore declares that, whatever corruptions invade the Church, the kernel of the Church will never be destroyed, but out of it will arise those who will be true to the Master's commission, and whose words will never be void of power.

Such seems to be the general drift of this chapter. It is stated thus briefly and simply that it may be kept in mind as a leading idea in the comments which follow, and because the chapter is generally regarded as one of the most difficult in the book. On the relation between the allusions to the Temple in this chapter and the date of the book, see *Introduction*. It is perhaps well to remember that, as we have taken Jerusalem and Babylon as symbolical names, and not necessarily the literal Jerusalem and the literal Babylon, so the Temple and the court of the Temple are to be understood as symbols. The gospel has elevated the history and places of the past into a grand allegory, and breathed into their dead names the life of an ever-applicable symbolism. (See *Introduction, On the General Meaning and Practical Value of the Book.*)

(1) **And there was . . .**— Translate, *And there was given to me a reed like a rod* (we must omit the words "and the angel stood"), *saying*. It is not said by whom the reed was given nor are we told who speaks the command. The whole transaction is impersonal. The reed, like a measuring rod, is given him, and at the same time the command is

a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying,

Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the

given to arise and measure the Temple, and the altar, and them that worship in the Temple. Here, again, we find the basis of the vision in the Old Testament. Ezekiel was brought, in vision, to a high mountain, and saw a man with a line of flax (for measuring long distances) and a measuring line (for shorter distances). But, more probably, the vision of Zechariah was in the seer's mind (Zech. ii. 1, 2), for the vision there of the man with the measuring rod to measure Jerusalem is followed, in the fourth chapter (Zech. iv. 1—6), by the vision of the two olive-trees, which are distinctly identified with the two witnesses in the present chapter (see verses 3, 4). The Temple, altar, and worshippers are to be measured. The measuring implies the protecting of, or the token of a resolve to protect, a portion of the sacred enclosure from desecration. The measuring, like the sealing of chap. vii., is a sign of preservation during impending dangers. To understand what is thus measured out for protection we must remember that there are two Greek words which are rendered Temple: the one (*hieron*) signifies "the whole compass of the sacred enclosure, including the outer courts, porches, porticoes, and other buildings subordinated to the Temple itself;" the other (*naos*) is the Temple itself, the house of God, the Holy and Holy of Holies. When it is said that Christ taught the people in the Temple, the first of these words is used; and it may be supposed that in one of the porches or courts of the sanctuary our Lord carried on His teaching. But when Zacharias is described as going into the Temple, the word is the second (*naos*), for he went into the Temple proper, and left the people in the outer court or court where the brazen altar stood. It is the second of these words which is used here: the Temple proper, the *naos*, the house of God, is measured, together with the altar. We are not told which altar is intended. It is at least too hasty to say that it must be the altar of incense, as this alone was in the Temple proper; for the explicit direction to measure the altar sounds like an extension of the measured area, and may perhaps mean that some portion of the court reserved for Israel is to be included in the measurement. The next verse, however, seems to imply that every spot outside the Temple proper was given up to the Gentiles, and was not to be measured. It is perhaps wisest, therefore, not to settle too definitely. The gist of the measurement is the preservation of the true, invisible Church, the Church within the Church; and everything necessary to the worship — Temple, altar, worshippers—all are reserved. There will always be the real and the conventional—the true and the formal Christian; always those who profess and call themselves Christians, and those who hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. These last are the called and chosen and faithful (Rev. xvii. 14), the sealed who dwell in the secret

altar, and them that worship therein. (2) But the court which is without the temple leave out,[1] and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot

[1] Gr. *cast out.*

place of the Most High, and find therefore their safe lodging in the night of danger under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. xci. 1; comp. also the whole Psalm, especially verses 4, 5, and 9—13).

(2) **But the court . . .**—Translate, *And the court which is outside the Temple cast out, and measure not it; because it was given to the nations* (Gentiles): *and they shall tread down the holy city forty and two months.* The outer court—meaning, perhaps, all that lies outside the Temple itself—is to be omitted. A strong word is used; the words "leave out" are far too weak. He is not only not to measure it, but he is, in a sort, to pass it over, as though reckoned profane. The reason of this is that it was given to the Gentiles. Our Lord had said that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles (Luke xxi. 24); the sacred seer catches the thought and the deeper significance. There is a treading down worse than that of the conqueror. It is the treading under of sacred things when the beast-power, or the world-power in men, tramples, like the swine, the pearls of grace under their feet, and turns fiercely upon those who gave them. Such an experience must the Church of Christ undergo. The shrine shall be safe, but the spirit of the nations, though nominally Christian, will be the spirit of Gentilism, worldliness, and even of violence. In the outer court of Church life there will be "the ebbing and flowing mass," who "sit in the way of knowledge," who "stand idle in the market-place," who have no oil in their lamps, and who indirectly pave the way for utter worldliness and practical heathenism. But there is a limit to this desecration: forty and two months it is to last. The same length of time is expressed in different forms throughout the book. Sometimes we have twelve hundred and sixty days, as in verse 3 and in chap. xii. 6; at another time forty-two months, as here and in chap. xiii. 5. A similar period seems to be meant in chap. xii. 14, where a time, times, and half a time is probably a way of expressing three years and a half: all three forms describe periods of the same length—not, of course, necessarily the same period. The idea is taken from Daniel, who uses such and similar expressions (Dan. vii. 25, and xii. 7, 11). This incorporation of the expressions used by Daniel is one of those hints which remind us that the laws and principles of God's government are the same in all ages: so that the principles which receive illustration in one set of historical events are likely to receive similar illustrations in after times; and that the prophecies of one era may contain seeds of fulfilment which spring to fruit in more than one age. Thus the words of Daniel were not exhausted in the age of Antiochus, nor the visions of the Apocalypse in the overthrow of any

forty *and* two months. [3] And I will give *power* | *or, I will give unto my two witnesses that they may prophesy.* | unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy[1] a

one nation or the corruptions of any one Church. So much may this constantly-recurring period of three years and a half, or forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, teach us. It is not needful, then, to take the period as an exact literal period. It is true that there have been some remarkable historical periods of this length, which various schools of interpreters have pointed out as the fulfilment of these prophecies; but there have been also remarkable blunders on the part of those who, forgetful of Christ's own warning, have tried to predict the year when certain prophecies will receive their accomplishments. It is true, also, that the future may bring us further light, and enable us to understand these descriptions of time better; but for the present, the period of forty and two months, the equivalent of three years and a half (the half of seven, the complete and divine number), is the symbol of a period limited in length, and under the control of Him who holds the seven stars and lives through the ages. It is the pilgrimage period of the Church, the period of the world's power, during which it seems to triumph; but the period of sackcloth (see verse 3) and of suffering will not last for ever.

(3–14) The Two Witnesses.—It is the opinion of one able and pre-eminently painstaking commentator that "no solution has ever been given of this portion of the prophecy." I quote this that none may be disappointed when no satisfactory solution is given here; further light in the knowledge of the Bible, and the light of history, and, above all, the aid of the Holy Spirit, may show what the real solution is. At present it is best to lay down the lines which seem to lead in the direction of such a solution. First, the aim of the present vision must be kept in mind; and secondly, the vision in Zechariah (chap. iv., all), on which this is professedly built, must be remembered. Now the aim of our present vision seems to be to explain that in the great progress towards victory the Church itself will suffer through corruptions and worldliness, but that the true Temple—the kernel, so to speak, of the Church—will be unharmed and kept safe in her Master's hands. But the position of this hidden and enshrined Church will not be one of idle security; in that Temple will be reared in secret, as the rightful king Josiah was, those who will witness undaunted and undefiled for their Lord; throughout the whole of that chequered period of profanation and pain there will never be wanting true witnesses for righteousness and faith. To assure the sacred seer that this would be the case, to exhibit the nature of their work and its results, is the apparent aim of the vision. If this be so, the witnesses can scarcely be literal individual men, though it is true that many literal individual men have played the part of these witnesses. Turning to the foundation vision in Zecha-

thousand two hundred *and* | | threescore days, clothed

riah, we find that the vision there is designed to encourage the weak and restored exiles in their work of rebuilding the Temple; they are shown that, weak as they are, there is a hidden strength, like a sacred stream of oil, which can make them triumph over all their difficulties: not by might or power, but by God's Spirit, the mountain would become a plain (Zech. iv. 6, 7), and "Grace! Grace!" would be the triumphant shout when the head-stone of the Temple was raised. In both visions, then, our minds are turned to the hidden sources of divine strength; there is a safe and secret place measured off by God, where He gives His children strength—not of ordinary might or power, but strength of grace. This is the grace which made Zerubbabel and Joshua strong to achieve their work; this is the grace which can make the two witnesses strong to do their part in the building of that more glorious spiritual temple which is built on the foundation of Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. The witnesses, then, stand as the typical representatives of those who, in the strength of God, have, through the long ages, borne witness for Christ against all wrong and falsehood, against a world in arms or a Church in error, or against a nominal Christianity in danger of becoming as corrupt and as cruel as heathenism. Such witnesses stand, like the two columns Jachin and Boaz, before the true Temple of God.

(3) **And I will give . . .**—Translate, *And I will give* (omit "power") *to my two witnesses, and they shall . . .* These are the words of God Himself; the omission of the words "and the angel stood" from verse 1 prevents any confusion of thought on this point. Two witnesses were required for competent evidence (Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15, *et al.*), and there has constantly been a sending forth of God's chosen messengers in pairs—Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, besides Joshua and Zerubbabel, alluded to by Zechariah; and in New Testament times our Lord sent forth His disciples "two and two," as afterwards Paul and Barnabas, or Paul and Silas went forth to preach. There is, besides the mere mutual support which two can give, a need for the association of two different characters in the same sort of work: the energy and the sympathy, the elucidator of doctrines and the messenger to the conscience, the apologist and the evangelist, the man of thought and the man of action, the Son of Thunder and the Son of Consolation; it is well that in a world-wide work this duality of power should be brought into play. The witnesses *prophesy:* the word prophesy must surely be allowed a much wider meaning than merely to predict or foretell future events. The compass of their work, as described afterwards, embraces much more than this (see verses 5—7): they work wonders, showing tokens that remind us of the days of Moses and Aaron; their words are mighty; their life is a testimony. Their prophesying, or witnessing, extends over forty and two months: a symbolical

in sackcloth. (4) These are the two olive trees,[a] and the two candlesticks standing before the God

[a] Zech. 4. 3, 11, 14.

period, as we have seen, but a period corresponding to that during which other witnesses had witnessed for God. Thus long did Elijah bear witness, under rain less heavens, against the idolatries of Israel; thus long did a greater than Elijah offer the water of life to the Jews, and witness against the hard, unspiritual, worldly religionism of the Pharisee and Sadducee; thus, too, must the witnesses for God bear testimony during the period that the world-power seems dominant. They are clad in sackcloth —the emblem of mourning (2 Kings vi. 30; Jon. iii. 4) adopted by the prophets, whose God-taught hearts saw reasons for mourning where shallower minds saw none (Isa. xx. 2, and Zech. xiii. 2). Compare the garb of Elijah and John the Baptist (2 Kings i. 8, and Matt. iii. 4), whose very apparel and appearance were designed to testify against the evils they saw. "The special witnesses of God, in a luxurious and self-pleasing age, are often marked out from the world by signs of self-denial, of austerity, and even of isolation" (Dr. Vaughan).

(4) **These are . . .**—Translate, *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks which stand before the Lord of the earth.* This is the verse which refers us to the vision of Zechariah for the basis of our present vision. There, as here, we have the two olive trees, which are explained to be "the two anointed ones which stand before the Lord of the whole earth." The explanation is supposed to refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua, or, as others think, to Zechariah and Haggai. At that time these men were the witnesses for God in their land and among their people. But the answer of the angel is general: "The olive-trees are the two anointed ones which stand," &c. For the vision is general and age-long; it reminds us of the returned Jewish exiles, and of those who were then among them, as anointed witnesses, but it shows us that such witnesses are to be found in more than one era; for it is not Zerubbabel and Joshua who can exhaust the fulness of a vision which is the representation of the eternal truth that the oil of gladness and strength from God will rest on those who rely, not on might or power, but on God's Spirit. The fact that the witnesses are two is brought more prominently forward here than in Zechariah. There, though the olive trees are two, the candlestick is but one, with seven lamps: here there are two candlesticks spoken of as well as two olive trees. This amplification of the original vision is, perhaps, designed to remind us of the greater latitude of diversity in the new dispensation. Just as in the early chapters of this book we had seven golden candlesticks, which, though one in Christ, yet are spoken of as separate, so here the double aspect, the diverse though united efforts of the two witnesses, are brought into prominence. It may serve to remind us that the witnesses are to be expected to keep their individuality and to use freely their diverse powers. It is not from one class or with one mode of action that the witnesses

of the earth. (5) And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. (6) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over

come: they may be of the statesman class, like Moses and Zerubbabel; of the prophetic or priestly, like Zechariah and Haggai, like Aaron and the later Joshua (Zech. iii. 1); for men may witness for God, according as the evils of their time and age require it, in the State as well as in the Church. The work of Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Howard is a work and a witness for God as well as the work of Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Luther; for the witnesses are raised up to speak against the neglect of humanity as well as against errors in divinity; against a heartless as well as against a creedless Christianity, for both lead back to heathenism. These witnesses are burning and shining lights; in them is centred the light of their age; in them is found the token that the grace of God never fails, but as the Church's day so shall her strength be. Here, too, we have the pledge that from Him who is both Priest and King the civil rulers as well as the ecclesiastical rulers may draw grace according to their gifts; and from Him, too, all who are made kings as well as priests to God may derive the power to give the double witness of a life anointed by the Spirit of consecration and ruled by the sceptre of righteousness.

(5) And if any man . . .— Better, *And if any one wills to injure them, fire goeth forth out of their mouths, and devoureth their enemies: and if any one wills to injure them, thus must he be slain. These have power to shut the heaven that the rain may not moisten* (the earth) *during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they will.* Again the Old Testament basis becomes evident; the histories of Elijah and Moses supply the illustration. The fire devouring their foes seems to allude to 2 Kings i. 10; like Elijah, they can close the heaven (1 Kings xvii. 1); like Moses, they can turn water into blood and summon down every plague (Ex. vii. 20, *et seq.*). These last characteristics remind us of the spirit and power of Moses and Elias, but we must not forget what has gone before: the witnesses are like olive trees and lights. In them is concentrated grace, light, and power; their witness recalls the great features of various Old Testament teachers and leaders; they display the light of truth, and men may not oppose or injure them with impunity; they wield a power which it is not safe to provoke. As from the mouths of the great Sixth Trumpet host there went forth fire and smoke and brimstone to kill the third part of mankind, so out of the mouths of these witnesses there goes forth a purer, but mightier flame. (Comp. Ps. xviii. 8.) We may compare the sword out of the mouth of

waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. (7) And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome

Christ (chap. i. 16), and the promise to Jeremiah (chap. v. 14), "Behold I will make my words in thy mouth fire and this people wood, and it shall devour them." The word which is like a sword to lay bare man to himself may become a consuming fire to those who resist or oppose it. The witnesses for God are thus armed with a spiritual might; for that word which, when accepted and lived by, brings peace, when rejected causes pain and danger. Thus often do the things which might have been for men's peace become an occasion for falling; the stone which, used and built into the life, becomes a precious cornerstone and immovable foundation, grinds to powder those upon whom it falls. Thus is it with these witnesses: they come to witness for principles which go to make the world a Paradise once more. The world, which casts away their words, will find them come back with scorching force; just as the breath of God gives life and beauty to the world, and power to men's hearts and lives (Ps. civ. 30; John xx. 22), yet with that same breath of His lips does He slay the wicked (Isa. xi. 4). Some have thought that there will be a time when witnesses for God will be raised up who will work literal wonders such as these. It is not for us to say that this will not be the case: all prophecy may take a sharper and clearer meaning as the times of the end draw near; but, meanwhile, it is needful for us to remember that the very power of truth is such that, when rejected, it can and does avenge itself by shutting heaven over our head, and making all the fresh rivulets of life's purest pleasures loathsome as blood to the sensualised and perverted heart.

(7) **And when . . .**—Better, *And when they shall have finished their testimony, the wild beast that goeth up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and conquer them, and kill them.* Only when their work is done has the wild beast power over them. To every one there are the symbolical twelve hours in which his life's work must be achieved; to every one there is the time secured when he may accomplish for God what God sent him to fulfil; then, but not till then, cometh the night, when none can work. *The wild beast:* We shall hear much of this wild beast later on. Here we are told distinctly that the wild beast will have his hour of triumph; he rises out of the abyss, as the locust horde did (chap. ix. 1, 2). There is, then, a beast-spirit which is in utter hostility to the Christ-spirit. We shall be able to study the features of this power in a future chapter (chap. xiii. 1); here he is seen to be a spirit of irreconcilable antagonism to Christ. The image here is not new; Daniel made use of it (Dan. vii.), though in a much more limited sense. This beast-power vanquishes the witnesses. If the witnesses are those

them, and kill them. [8] And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. [9] And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. [10] And they that dwel upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because

---

who have taught the principles of a spiritual and social religion, the death of the witnesses following their overthrow signifies the triumph of opposing principles, the silencing of those who have withstood the growing current of evil. Men can silence, can conquer, can slay the witness for a higher, purer, nobler life. They have done so. The history of the world is often the history of the postponement of moral and social advancement for centuries through the wild outbreak of some brutal, irrational, selfish spirit. The Reformers, the best friends of the Church and of the world, have been silenced and slain, and their death has often been little more than the triumph of the ignorance and selfishness of a practical heathenism.

[8–10] **And their dead bodies . . .**—Better, *And their corpse* (*is*) *upon the street of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord also was crucified. And some from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations look upon their corpse three days and a half, and do not suffer their corpses to be put into a tomb. And they that dwell upon the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth.* Their corpses remain unburied, while congratulations and rejoicings go on; harmony and concord prevail, as when Pilate and Herod were made friends; it is the millennium of evil, the paradise of fools who make a mock at sin, but the forms of the witnesses, though silenced, still in silence witness against evil. At no time are they hid away out of sight. Even in an age of religious and social anarchy the silent tokens of a better order remain, as when in mockery and profanation the harlot was enthroned within Notre Dame, the very sanctuary walls which no longer echoed to the psalm of Christian life, yet bore silent testimony to the higher genius of the past. They are said to lie in "the street of the great city." The city is described as the great city (comp. chap. xvi. 19), and also as Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem. Do not passages like this show conclusively that to deny the mystical or allegorical sense of the Apocalypse is to keep the husk and cast away the seed? The city is great, for it is all-important in the eyes of the inhabitants, as public opinion is all-important to the weak or the worldly; it is Sodom, for it is the place where, through pleasure and

these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. (11) And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. (12) And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and

luxuriousness (fulness of bread), the worst forms of immorality take root; it is Egypt, for it is the house of bondage, where the wages of sin become tyrannous; it is Jerusalem, for it is the apostate place where the presence of Christ is hated. The same spirit which slew their Lord is alive to persecute His servants. "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household;" and the reason of this hatred is told—the words of the witnesses "tormented them." "The reproof of their gospel and the reproof of their example . . . had been a torture to them; there was a voice in them which echoed its voice—the voice of a convicting conscience, and the voice of an anticipated judgment."

(11) **And after three days . . .**—Better, *And after the three days and a half* (not simply "three days and a half,") *a Spirit of life out of* (*from*) *God entered into* (or, *in; i.e.*, so as to be in) *them, and they stood upon their feet; and a great fear fell upon those who beheld them.* The vision of the dry bones will be remembered; in part, the very wording of it is employed here—*e.g.*, "they stood upon their feet" (Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10); and a yet more sacred remembrance—the three days of our Master's death-sleep—will be traced here. "Where I am there shall also My servant be" (John xii. 26). "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). There is a resurrection power in even rejected truth; the strength of it is undying. If it be of God, men cannot overthrow it. "The corn of wheat that dies brings forth much fruit." The cause that seemed dead is found to be possessed of a renewed power and life. "There is an end of resistance to the Papal rule and religion; opposers exist no more!" cried the orator of the Lateran Council in 1514; but within three years and a half the hand of Luther nailed up his theses at Wittenberg. It is one illustration among many.

(12) **And they heard . . .**—Translate, *And they heard* (or, *I heard;* the MS. authority is divided, though the balance inclines to the first) *a great voice out of the heaven saying to them, Come up hither. And they went up into the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.* The resurrection of the witnesses is followed by their ascension. It is the token that in this too they shall have a portion with their Lord: rejected and slain, there is a welcome and honour for them; they take their place with those who through faith

their enemies beheld them. (13) And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men[1] seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. (14) The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh

[1] Gr. *names of men.*

and patience inherit the promises; they rest from their labours. But this is not all. Like Elijah (2 Kings ii. 11), they are taken up gloriously, but not, like Elijah, in comparative secret; their enemies see their exaltation. As for the witnesses themselves there is the welcome rest of heaven, so there is the visible recognition of their work and power on earth; the cause which seemed dead revives, and with its revival comes the recognition of those who laboured for it; the martyred are seen transfigured, they become glorious in the eyes of men:

> "Persecution dragged them into fame,
> And chased them up to heaven."

They went up in *the* cloud: There is here, perhaps, a touch of recollection. St. John remembers the cloud which received his Lord out of sight. Since then the cloud mingles with his every thought of ascension or descending from heaven. (Comp. chap. i. 7; Acts i. 9.) The witnesses, like their Master, disappeared in the cloud.

(13) **And the same hour . . .** —Better, *And in that hour there was* (took place) *a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and there were slain in the earthquake names of men seven thousand: and the rest became affrighted, and gave glory to the God of the heaven.* The hour of their triumph is the hour of a retributive warning on the city where they were slain: convulsion, with the overthrow of dwellings and the death of seven thousand men. Is it accidental that the number is the same as the number of those who had not bowed to Baal? (1 Kings xix. 18.) Rejected reformation avenges itself in revolution, and the city which might have been purified by the word is purged by the spirit of judgment (Isa. iv. 4); good is effected, even through fear; some are saved though as by fire; and, unlike those who repented not (chap. ix. 21), they give glory to the God of heaven. The visible Church of Christ is stirred; there is a reaction from the spirit of worldliness.

(14) **The second woe . . .**— Translate, *The second woe is past.* (Omit the word "and," which weakens the proclamation.) The eagle flying in mid-heaven had announced the three woe trumpets. A voice now reminds us that two of these had passed, just as at the close of the fifth trumpet a voice proclaimed that the first woe was past. We must remember, too, that the angel which descended from heaven declared that the end should not be delayed beyond the sounding of the seventh trumpet; the last woe trumpet, therefore, is the trumpet which will usher in the closing woe and the finishing of the mystery of God. Whatever view we adopt concerning the interpretation of

quickly. (15) And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (16) And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their

Chap. xi. 15—19. The seventh trumpet. Third woe.

---

the Apocalypse must be governed by the plainly declared fact that the seventh trumpet brings us to the very end. The next verse only serves to make this plainer.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET—THE LAST WOE TRUMPET.

(15) **And the seventh angel . . .**—Better, *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in the heaven* (*persons*) *saying, The kingdom of the world is become* (*the possession*) *of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign to the ages of ages.* The literal translation is, *The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's, and of His Christ.* As far as the expression "our Lord's" is concerned, there is no need that any word, such as kingdom or possession, should be supplied, but the additional phrase of "His Christ" creates an awkwardness, and the word "possession," or *inheritance*, may not inappropriately be used from the Psalm which foretells this final establishment of the kingdom of the anointed Messiah, the Christ of God. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). It is the kingdom—not, as in the English version, "the kingdoms"—of the world which has become Christ's possession. The contest is not for the kingdoms, the separate nationalities: the varying political systems might exist, as far as mere organisation is concerned, under the rule of Christ; the contest is for the kingdom of the world. Satan was willing to surrender the kingdoms of the world to our Lord on condition of a homage which would have left him still in possession of the kingdom of the world. But now the close of the contest is the overthrow of the kingdom of evil, the establishment of the kingdom of good: that is, of God; *and He shall reign for ever and ever.* Dean Alford pointed out that our familiarity with the "Hallelujah Chorus" tempted us to put an emphasis on the word *He* which is not sanctioned by the Greek; it is the *reign* of the Lord which is the prominent thought. The reign is unto the ages of ages. Surely this means *always*. We are not told whose voices sing this chorus; it is just the tumultuous sound of heavenly voices, growing into natural and irresistible chorus as the trumpet heralds the approach of the glorious end.

(16) **And the four . . .**—Translate, *And the four-and-twenty elders, who before God were seated upon their thrones* (not "seats") *fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.* The four-and-twenty elders represent the Church of God in all ages; they sit with Christ in

faces, and worshipped God, (17) saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. (18) And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,

heavenly places, even while they are toiling and sorrowing on earth; every one of the true children of the kingdom appear before God, and their angels behold the presence of their Father who is in heaven. They were seated on *thrones*, not "seats" (comp. chap. iv. 4), as in English version; the word used is the same which is translated "throne" when it refers to our Lord. It is the same word which is rendered "seat" (chaps. ii. 13, and xvi. 10) when it refers to Satan; but it is better rendered *throne* throughout, for by this variation of translation, as "Archbishop Trench has pointed out, two great ideas which run through this book, and, indeed, we may say through the whole of the New Testament, are obliterated: the one, that the true servants of Christ are crowned with Him and share His sovereignty; the other, that the antagonism of the Prince of Darkness to the Prince of Light develops itself in the hellish parody of the heavenly kingdom" (Prof. Lightfoot, *Revision of New Testament*, p. 41). It is specially desirable that this thought should be kept before us in this passage, which proclaims that the kingdom and throne and power of the wicked one have passed away, and the hour has come when the victorious saints may sit down with Christ in His throne (chap. iii. 21).

THE CHORUS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(17) **Saying, We give thee thanks . . .**—Better,

"We thank Thee, O Lord,
The God, the Almighty,
He that is, and He that was,
Because Thou hast taken Thy great power and didst reign.
And the nations were angry,
And then came Thine anger
And the season of the dead to be judged,
And to give their rewards to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints,
And to them that fear Thy name, the small and the great,
And to destroy them that destroy the earth."

On the expression "He that is and He that was," comp. chap. i. 8 and the Note there. We can catch the echo of the Second Psalm throughout this chorus of grateful praise. The prayers of the groaning Church (chap. v. 10, and Luke xviii. 7, 8) and the cries of travailing creation (Rom. viii. 19) have been heard; though the heathen raged and the people imagined a vain thing, their counsel against the Lord and His anointed, His Christ (compare verse 16), came to nought; the joy of their triumph was short-lived; the kingdom of evil was but for a moment; the kings were assembled, they passed by, they saw, they were troubled, they hasted away (Ps. xlviii. 4, 5); never did the real sovereignty of the Lord cease (Ps. ii. 6); but the nations would not believe in His rule; they were not wise; they

and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy[1] the earth.

[1] Or, *corrupt.*

(19) And the temple of God

turned from the kiss of reconciliation, which was life (Ps. ii. 10—12); then came His anger, and the season of judgment and the season of reward. The prophets, the saints, and those that fear God's name, the small and the great—every class and rank of the true servants of the King are included here; none are forgotten; not a cup of cold water, given in His name, shall miss its reward; for not alone the pre-eminent in Christian power and in Christian holiness, but the weak, the struggling, the obscure, the small as well as the great, are remembered: "Unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Zion" (Ps. lxxxiv. 7; Prayer Book version). Nor is the gladness only for this blessing; there is a joy at the overthrow of those who destroy the earth. The reign of evil is the destruction of the earth. The judgments of God are in mercy to stay the spread of destructive powers and principles. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel; the very judgments of God are merciful. (See Note on chap. viii. 2.)

But where, we may be disposed to ask, is the "woe" in all this? We are led to expect that the seventh trumpet as a woe trumpet will bring in some period of pain and trouble, as the others have done, but all we hear is the chorus of glad voices uttering praise: we see no token of woe. The answer is that we must not overlook all that this song of rejoicing implies. The chorus we hear is the thanksgiving to God that the hour has come for the overthrow of the kingdom of evil, the manifestation of the sons of God, and the acknowledgment throughout the world of the sovereignty of the Lord and of His Christ. The overthrow of that evil kingdom, which is now to take place, brings with it woe to those who have supported it; for the time of the judgment of the dead, and of those whose lives have marred God's word, has come. It is, then, woe on all those who have misused God's gifts and those beautiful things which He gave us liberally to enjoy. It is a woe on those who have defiled those bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Ghost, profaned the earth, which is God's footstool, or darkened by their evil deeds the heaven, which is His throne. Those who thus defile (or, *destroy:* the word is so in the margin, and is the same as that which follows) God's temple anywhere, God will destroy (1 Cor. vi. 19, and iii. 17).

(19) **And the temple of God . . .**—Translate, *And the temple of God was opened in the heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and a great hail.* At the beginning of the chapter we noticed the distinction between the two words (*naos* and *hieron*) applied to the Temple; the Temple building proper (the *naos*) was measured off. Now this (*naos*) Temple is

was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

opened, yes, to its very inmost recesses; for not the holy place alone is disclosed, but the holiest of all, the shrine of shrines, into which the high priest alone—and he only once a year—entered, is opened, as though anew the veil of the Temple had been rent in twain, and there the ark of the covenant of God is seen. The meaning of this, when read by the light of the measuring of the Temple, seems to be that now the secret abode of the safe-guarded children of God was revealed. In the hour of apostasies and worldliness the faithful had found their strength and protection in the shadow of the Almighty; they were regarded by God as His true living Temple, and in them He dwelt, as they, too, found their defence in Him. But now that the end has come there is no need that these should be hidden any more. The children of God, who are the temple of God, are made manifest; and at the same time the secret spot of their shelter in troublous days is made plain, and in it is seen the token of that everlasting covenant which was the sheet-anchor of their hopes in the day of their trouble (Heb. vi. 19). The ark of God's covenant is seen; the ark which contained the tables of the law, the rod of Aaron, and the manna is unveiled; and now is known whence they derived that hidden manna, that bread of heaven which strengthened their hearts in the days of temptation; now is known how it was that the rod of Christ's power flourished and blossomed in spite of oft-repeated rejection; now, too, are known those high and holy principles by which the lives of the saints of God were ruled, even that law which the divine Spirit had written in their hearts (Heb. x. 16, and 2 Cor. iii. 2). Then, too, with the ark of God's covenant, is brought into view the mercy-seat, that throne of grace to which the weary and heavy-laden children of God had so often gone, and where they had never failed to receive grace to help in every time of need (Heb. iv. 16). The Temple of God was opened, and the secret springs of power which sustained the patience and faith of the saints are found to be in God. And out of the opened Temple, or round about it, as round the sacred peak of Sinai, the lightnings are seen and voices and thunders are heard: the tokens of that holy law which the power of the world had defied are made manifest; for God's righteousness has not lost its strength, and that which is a power of help to those who seek their shelter in God becomes a power of destruction to those who turn from Him. The habitation of God is an open sanctuary to faith; it is a clouded and lightning-crowned Sinai to faithlessness. (Comp. Heb. xii. 18—24.) The spirit of evil, of selfishness, of luxuriousness, of profanity, which reject its birthright of better thoughts and holy things, leads to "the mount that burned with fire, and unto blackness and darkness

CHAPTER XII. —

Chap. xii. 1–6. The hostility of the arch-enemy.

(1) And there appeared a great wonder[1] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon

A.D. 95.

[1] Or, *sign.*

and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words;" the Spirit of God leads to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven."

XII.

We now enter upon the third group of visions (or, the fourth section of the book, if we include the epistles to the seven churches), which occupy chapters xii., xiii., and xiv., and close with the solemn scene of the harvest and the vintage (chap. xiv. 14—20). The close of each series of visions is in harmony with their general intention, and, as such, affords a key to their meaning. The seals end in peace; the trumpets end in victory; the present visions end in harvest. We have been shown that toil and trouble shall end in rest and conflict in triumph; now we are to be shown that there is to be a harvest at the end of the world, when the fruits of the conflicting principles of life will have ripened, and when whatsoever a man hath sown that shall he also reap: and men will be seen as they are. This set of visions accordingly moves in a different plane from the earlier groups; starting from the same point as the others, it reviews the ground with a different purpose. It deals with the spiritual conditions of the great war between evil and good; it disrobes the false appearances which deceive men; it makes manifest the thoughts of men's hearts; it shows that the great war is not merely a war between evil and good, but between an evil spirit and the Spirit of God: and that, therefore, the question is not only one between right and wrong conduct, but between true and false spiritual dispositions. Men look at the world, and they acknowledge a kind of conflict between evil and good; their sympathies are vaguely on the side of good; they admire much in Christianity; they are willing to think the martyred witnesses of the Church heroes; they think the reformers of past ages worthy of honour; they would not be averse to a Christianity without Christ or a Christianity without spirituality. They do not realise that the war which is raging round them is not a war between men morally good and men morally bad, but between spiritual powers, and that what the Gospel asks is not merely a moral life, but a life lived by faith in the Son of God, a life in which the spiritual dispositions are Godward and Christward. The Apocalypse, in this set of visions, unveils the spiritual aspects of the conflict, that we may know that the issue is not between Christianity and un-Christianity, but between Christianity and anti-Christianity. Hitherto we have seen the more outward aspects of the great war. Now we are to see its hidden, secret, spiritual—yes, supernatural aspects—that we may understand what immeasurably divergent and

under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; [2] and she being with child cried, travailing

antagonistic principles are in conflict under various and specious aspects in the history of the world. Accordingly, we are shown the child encountered by the dragon, the woman in conflict with the dragon, the wild beast as the adversary of the lamb. We see no longer the battle under human forms, as the struggle for the possession of the Temple; but we see clearly and unmistakably the real issue which is being fought out, and we see the real spiritual work which the Church is designed to accomplish in the world. The motto of this section might well be, "He that is not with me is against me" — "He that gathereth not with me scattereth;" for only those who are truly with Christ will avoid falling under the yoke of one of the three enemies of Christ—the dragon and the two wild beasts animated and inspired by him.

[1] **And there appeared . . .** —Better, *And a great sign was seen in the heaven.* The word *sign* is preferable to "wonder," both in this verse and in verse 3. It is the same word which is rendered sign in chap. xv. 1. It is a sign which is seen: not a mere wonder, but something which has a meaning; it is not "a surprise ending with itself," but a signal to arrest attention, and possessing significance; there is "an idea concealed behind it." (Comp. Note on John ii. 11.)

A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.— All the lights of heaven are brought together here for a description which cannot fail to remind us of the picture of the Shulamite in the Canticles (vi. 10): "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners (or, *the heavenly host*)?" It is the picture of the bride, the Church. The beams of the divine glory clothe her; she has caught—like Moses — the radiance of her Lord, whose countenance was as the sun (chap. i. 16); the moon is beneath her feet; she rises superior to all change, and lays all lesser lights of knowledge under tribute; she is crowned with a crown of twelve stars: the illustrious members of the Church (twelve being the representative number in Old Testament as well as New Testament times) form her crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.

[2] **And she . . .**—Better, *And being with child, she crieth, travailing, and tormented to bring forth.* All life dawns in anguish, according to the ancient fiat (Gen. iii. 16); but this is not all. There is an anguish of the Church which Christ laid upon her; it is the law of her life that she must bring forth Christ to the world; it is not simply that she must encounter pain, but that she cannot work deliverance without knowing suffering. Thus the Apostles felt: the love of Christ constrained them; woe it would be to them if they did not preach the Gospel; necessity was laid upon them; they spoke of themselves as travailing in birth over their children till Christ was formed in them. This,

in birth, and pained to be delivered. (3) And there appeared another wonder[1] in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns,

[1] Or, *sign.*

then, is the picture, the Church fulfilling her destiny even in pain. The work was to bring forth Christ to men, and never to be satisfied till Christ was formed in them, *i.e.*, till the spirit of Christ, and the teaching of Christ, and the example of Christ were received, loved, and obeyed, and men transformed to the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But there was to be opposition; the enemy is on the watch to destroy the likeness of Christ wherever it was seen.

(3) **And there appeared . . .** —*And another sign was seen in the heaven; and behold a great red dragon.* This, too, is a sign, and has a meaning. The dragon stands for some dread and hostile power. "The dragon is that fabulous monster of whom ancient poets told, as large in size, coiled like a snake, blood red in colour . . . insatiable in voracity, and ever athirst for human blood"—a fit emblem of him whom our Lord declared to be a murderer from the beginning; for the dragon is intended here to describe him who, in verse 9, is also said to be that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan. The red colour is the colour of flame and blood, and the symbol of destruction and slaughter. The dragon is the emblem of the evil spirit, the devil, the perpetual antagonist of good, the persecutor of the Church in all ages (comp. Ps. lxxiv. 13): just as the dragon is sometimes employed to represent the Egyptian power, the ancient foe of Israel (Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3).

Having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns (*diadems*) **upon his heads.**—This is the further description of the dragon. He is one, yet diverse; one, as an evil spirit; diverse, in the varieties of his power. The woman is but one: but her foe is multiform; she has one trust to keep, one work to do, and can but fulfil it in her Master's way: evil is bound by no law, regards no scruple, and exerts its power through any channel, and by every means. Is there not also an assumption of divine similitude here in the use of the number seven? It is at least the representation of the great and world-wide power which he exercises as the prince of this world, whose kingdom is in much a parody of the true kingdom. The whole description should be compared with the account given of the beast in chap. xvii. 3, 7, 10, 12. There the seven heads are explained as seven kings, and the heads here are crowned; the ten horns are also explained as ten kings. The sevenfold kingship and the tenfold power of the world are thus described as belonging to the dragon. The picture here, as the picture of the wild beast in chap. xvii., represents, as concentrated into a single hostile form, all the varying forces and successive empires which have opposed or oppressed the people of God, and sought to destroy their efforts for good; for all evil has its root in a

and seven crowns upon his heads. (4) And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (5) And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all

spirit at enmity with God. Hence the dragon appears armed with all the insignia of those sovereignties and powers which have been animated by this spirit.

(4) **And his tail . . .**—Translate, *And his tail drags* (or, *sweeps*) *away the third part of the stars of the heaven, and casts them to the earth.* The stars are the light-bearers, the illustrious of earth, who were given by God high place that they might be burning and shining lights for Him. A large proportion of these are drawn away in the train of evil; they are cast down from their high position of noble opportunities of good work and great work; they are dragged down from the height of the grandest possibilities of good to the low level of a life enslaved to evil.

And the dragon.—Translate, *And the dragon stands* (not "stood") *before the woman who is about to bring forth, that whenever she has brought forth he may devour her child.* The spirit of evil is represented as ever on the watch to destroy the first tokens of better things. Our minds go back to the hatred and fear of Pharaoh, setting a watch for the offspring of Israel and ordering their destruction; and even more are we reminded of the jealous hatred of Herod seeking the life of the infant Christ. It seems clear that it is on this last incident that the present vision is primarily built up; but its meaning is much wider than this. It shows us that evermore, as Herod waited to destroy Christ, the devil, the old spirit whose malignity wrought through the fears of Pharaoh and of Herod, is on the watch to destroy every token of good and every resemblance to Christ in the world. The mission of the Church is to bring forth in her members this life of Christ before men: the aim of the wicked spirit is to destroy that life. The same hostility which was shown to the infant Christ is active against His children: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

(5) **And she brought forth . . .**—Translate, *And she brought forth a man child, who is to shepherd all the nations with* (it is, literally, *in*) *a rod of iron.* There can be no doubt that this man child is Christ. The combination of features is too distinct to admit of doubt. It is the one who will feed His flock like a shepherd (Isa. xl. 12), who is to have, not His own people, but all nations as His inheritance (Ps. ii. 7—9), and whose rule over them is to be supreme and irresistible. But the fact that this child is Christ must not cause us to limit the meaning of the vision to the efforts of the evil one to destroy the infant Jesus; for it is also the Christ in the Church which the wicked one hates: and wherever Christ

nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne. (6)And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there

dwells in any heart by faith, and wherever the preachers of the gospel in earnest travail for their Master, seek to lift up Christ, there will the foe be found, like the fowls of the air ready to carry away the good seed. Though the basis of the vision is in the historical fact, the power of the vision reaches over a wider area, and forcibly reminds us that as there are irreconcilable principles at work in the world, so all these, when traced to their original forms, are the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil.

And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.—The efforts of the evil one to destroy are thwarted; the child is snatched away and placed out of the range of the dragon's power. The prince of this world might instigate Israel to take Jesus Christ and with wicked hands crucify and kill Him, but the eternal divine life of Him who had power to lay down His life and take it again, and whose years were for ever and ever, was beyond the reach of every hostile power; and after death and resurrection, Christ ascended up where He was before. But the vision is designed to assure us that, precisely because of this, so all life in Christ is beyond the power of the evil one, and that the forces hostile to good are powerless against that life which is hid with Christ in God. The Church may be as a weak, oppressed, and persecuted woman, but her faith rises up as a song from the lips of its members. "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The contest is between the man child and the dragon; and those who in heart and mind ascend to where Christ is know that the contest is not one of mere ideas, but a conflict between the Christ, who is with them always, though He has ascended, and all the powers of evil, which will be smitten down by the rod of His power.

(6) **And the woman fled . . .** —Translate, *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared from God, that there they may nourish her for a thousand two hundred and sixty days.* The flight of the woman into the wilderness, and her fortunes there, are more fully described in verse 13. This verse simply tells us that the woman fled; we read afterwards that it was persecution which drove her into the wilderness As long as the evil one can be called the prince of this world: as long, that is, as the world refuses to recognise her true Prince, and pays homage to worldliness, and baseness, and falseness in heart, mind, or life, so long must the Church, in so far as she is faithful to Him who is true, dwell as an exile in the wilderness. This feeling it was — not any hostility to life as life, or to life's duties—which led the Apostle to speak of Christians as strangers and pilgrims, and of the Church as

a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days. (7) And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his

Chap. xii. 7—12. The heavenly victory over the arch-enemy.

another Israel, whom a greater than Moses or Joshua was conducting to a land of better promise (Heb. iv. 8, 9). The woman, the representative of the Church, has a place prepared by God for her in the wilderness; she is not altogether uncared for; she has a place prepared, and nourishment. God provides her with a tabernacle of safety (Ps. xc. 1), and with the true Bread "which came down from heaven" (Ex. xvi. 15; Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25; John vi. 49, 50), and with the living water from the Rock (John iv. 14, vii. 37—39; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4). The time of the sojourn in the wilderness is twelve hundred and sixty days, a period corresponding in length to the forty-two months during which the witnesses prophesied; it is the period of the Church's witness against predominant evil. Driven forth, her voice, though but as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, is lifted up on behalf of righteousness and truth.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN.

(7) And there was war . . .—Translate, *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels.* This is one of those passages which has ever been regarded as more or less perplexing. It has afforded material for many poetic fancies, and has been the occasion of much speculative interpretation. We shall fail to catch the spirit of its meaning if we insist upon detaching the passage from its context; and the more so that the structure of the chapter seems to give an express warning against doing so. The narrative of the woman's flight into the wilderness is suspended that this passage may be inserted. Could we have a clearer indication of the anxiety of the sacred writer to connect this war in heaven with the birth and rapture of the man child? The man child is born; born a conqueror. The dragon is His foe, and the powers of the foe are not confined to the material and historical world; he is a power in the world spiritual; but the man child is to be entirely a conqueror. His rapture into heaven is the announcement that there, in the very highest, He is acknowledged victor; and His victory is won over the power of the dragon, the old serpent, whose head is now bruised. "The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus Christ, "and hath nothing in Me." "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Do we need more? There is mystery—unexplained mystery, perhaps—about this war in heaven, but there need be none about the general occasion referred to; it is the overthrow of the evil one by Christ: the death-blow given by the Lord of Life to him who had the power

angels, [8] and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. [9] And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. [10] And I heard a loud voice saying

of death; it is the victory of Bethlehem, Calvary, and Olivet which is commemorated, and the effects of which are seen to transcend the sphere of the things seen. But why have we Michael and his angels introduced? This may be one of those unexplained mysteries referred to above. Some, indeed, think that this Michael is a designation of our Lord Himself, and of Him alone; but a consideration of the other passages in which Michael is mentioned (notably Dan. x. 13, where Michael is called "one of the chief princes") leaves this limited meaning doubtful, and almost suggests conflict among the spiritual hierarchies. It may, however, be the case that the name *Michael*—the meaning of which is, "who is like unto God"—is a general name applied to any who for the moment represent the cause of God in the great conflict against evil. It may thus belong, not to any one angel being, but be a kind of type-name used for the champion and prince of God's people, and so employed in this passage to denote Him who is the Captain of our salvation.

[8] **And prevailed not . . .**—Better, *And their power failed them, and not even was place for them found any more in the heaven.* The result of the war was the dragon's defeat. The whole power of the evil hosts failed them. There is an inherent weakness in evil: a spot which may be touched whereupon all its vaunted strength withers. So complete was the overthrow, that even their place knew them no more. "I went by, and, lo! he was gone; I sought him, but he could nowhere be found."

[9] **And the great dragon . . .**—Better, *And he was thrown down, the great dragon, the ancient serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan: he who deceives the whole world was thrown to the earth, and his angels were thrown with him.* Thus the victory of Christ is marked by the overthrow of the great adversary. The stronger than the strong one has come, and taken away his armour (Luke xi. 21, 22). The death-blow is given. The prince of this world (who found nothing in Christ) is judged (John xvi. 11). The adversary is described as the dragon, the fierce and cruel foe who is ever ready to devour (1 Pet. v. 8). *The ancient serpent.* The serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle. (Comp. Gen. iii. 1.) But the head of the ancient foe of man is now bruised: he is the devil, the accuser and calumniator. He is called the accuser of the brethren in the next verse; he is Satan, the adversary, and he is the seducer, the deceiver, as he is a liar, and the father of it (John viii. 44).

[10] **And I heard a loud voice . . .**—Better, *And I heard a great*

in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (11) And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;

voice in the heavens saying, Now is come the salvation, and the might, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. The definite article is placed before the words "salvation" and "might." The words of this doxology are like an echo of the close of the Lord's Prayer. The prayer "Thy kingdom come" seems answered. Now is come the kingdom. But it is not the full establishment of the kingdom which is here described; it is rather the manifestation of it. Since our Master passed into the heavens — and His victory is achieved, we know Him to be *King*, and even while we pray "Thy kingdom come" we yet confess "Thine is the kingdom"— the salvation so anxiously looked for (1 Pet. i. 10); the power so much needed by weak and sinful men (1 Pet. i. 5 and 1 Cor. i. 24); and the kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. xii. 28). The accuser of the brethren is cast down. This is another reason for joy and another feature of the salvation. The habit of the accuser is expressed by the use of the present tense. We should read not "who accused," but "who *accuseth*." Night and day he accused. (Comp. Zech. iii. 1, and Job i. 9, and ii. 5.) In Jewish writings, Michael is called "the advocate" (*sunegor*), and stands in opposition to the accuser (*kategor*); but now the accuser is cast down; for who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, when it is God that justifieth, when it is Christ that died? (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

(11) **And they overcame him** . . .—Better, *And they conquered him* (not "by," but) *on account of the blood of the Lamb, and on account of the word of their testimony*, &c. They overcame him—*i.e.*, the accuser, the devil: their victory over him is "owing to" the blood of the Lamb. Who is he that condemneth, when Christ hath died? What power can the accusations of the adversary have when the Lamb of God hath taken away the sin of the world (John i. 29), and when we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? (Heb. x. 19.) Dean Alford mentions the tradition that Satan accuses men all days of the year except on the Day of Atonement. But their victory is also in virtue of the *word of their testimony:* in virtue of the word to which they bore witness; not simply, I think, because they had a word of God to which they could bear witness, but because they had a word of God and did bear witness to it. The Christian victory is a victory of dependence and of obedience: of dependence on Him without whom they can do nothing; and of obedience to Him: it is in keeping of His commandments there is great reward: and in bearing testimony that the testimony be-

and they loved not their lives unto the death. [12] Therefore rejoice, *ye* heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he

comes a power and a treasure. So it was the man who did Christ's commandments who was like the man whose house was founded on the rock. Theoretical religion relaxes the energy of faith, even though it may brace the intellect; practical religion invigorates faith, gives it its force, and moulds the heroism of those who in their love of Christ, "love not their lives even unto death." It is thought that these last words imply that the martyred saints alone are spoken of. This seems to me a mistake. It is true that in the martyr we have the fullest practical token of that spirit of devotion to Christ which loves Him more than life itself; but the spirit of such devotion and such love has breathed in thousands who have never died the martyr's death, but who have devoted their lives to Him they loved. The martyr spirit needs not death to show itself; many lose their lives for Christ's sake who have never been called to lay down their lives for Him, and these, as truly as those who have passed away in the shroud of flame, have loved not their lives unto the death. "He may bid us die for Him: He does bid us live for Him. If we do not the one—the less—we may be quite sure that we shall never rise to the other—the higher and the more glorious" (Dr. Vaughan).

[12] **Therefore rejoice . . .**—Better, *For this cause rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them.* The words "for this cause" must be taken to refer to the overthrow of the evil one. This is the cause of joy to the heavens, and to them that tabernacle (not "dwell") in them. The word is (as in chaps. vii. 15, xiii. 6, xxi. 3) "tabernacle." This allusion to the tabernacle where the glory of God and the mercy-seat were to be found, is not without force. The sacred imagery of the tabernacle of witness calls to mind the safe dwelling which the sanctuary of God afforded to those whose testimony was given in the wilderness of sorrow. Those who tabernacled in the secret place of the Most High could rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Woe to the inhabiters . . .—Translate, *Woe to the earth and the sea!* (the words "to the inhabiters of" are not found in the best MSS.) *because the devil is gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing* (or, *because he knoweth:* his knowledge that his season of power is short is the reason of his great wrath) *that he hath* (*but*) *a short season.* The painful consciousness of defeat has roused a deeper and more obstinate rage. Sin, which blunts the conscience, blinds the reason, and drives men madly to attempt the impossible, or to rouse

> "the unconquerable will
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield."

hath but a short time. (13) And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*. (14) And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and

Chap. xii. 13—17. The persecution of the Church.

The *woe* to the sea and earth is simply a warning voice to all that, though the foe is overcome and death smitten, yet that he has power, quickened by defeat and fear, for a last struggle; and that therefore they need to be sober and vigilant against the adversary. His season is short. He may be active, sowing tares among the wheat and animating various hostile powers, such as the wild beasts of chap. xiii.; but he has only a season: there is a limit to his power and the time of his power. "A little while" was the word our Lord used to denote His time of absence (John xvi. 16—22): "Behold, He comes quickly!"

(13) **And when the dragon . . .**—The wrath of the defeated dragon is manifested in persecution of the woman. The present verse explains the reason of the flight into the wilderness mentioned in verse 6.

(14) **And to the woman . . .**—Better, *And there were given to the woman (the) two wings of the great eagle* (the definite article is used before "great eagle"), *that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place, where she is nourished there for a season, and seasons, and half a season, from the face of the serpent.* The woman is persecuted and driven into the wilderness: yet it is with the eagle wings given her by her Lord that she flies; the serpent drives her into the wilderness: yet it is in the wilderness that her place is prepared by God. The way that seems hard is the way that is most blest. The opposition of the dragon brings her blessings that she never would have received except in persecution; neither the eagle power nor the heavenly sustenance had been hers without the serpent's hate. Thus is the trial of faith precious in bringing us to know the priceless blessings of heavenly help and heavenly food. She is given eagle's wings. God had spoken of the deliverance of Israel under a similar emblem, "Ye have seen . . . how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself" (Ex. xix. 4; comp. Deut. xxxii. 10—12). There is a difference as well as a resemblance in the emblem here. In Exodus God is said to have borne Israel on eagles' wings: here the wings are given to the woman. The strength of the earlier dispensation is a strength often used for, rather than in, the people of God; the strength of the latter is a strength in them: "They mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. xl. 31). The place is not a chance spot: it is prepared of God; it is in the wilderness, but still it is the place God prepared for her. It is always a delight to faith to mark how the

times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. (15) And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might

ordering of God works in and through the wilfulness and wickedness of the enemy: the Son of man goeth, as it was written, though there is a "woe" against the man by whom He is betrayed. The wicked one can never drive us from God's place, but only to it, unless we are enemies to ourselves. She is nourished in the wilderness. (See Notes on verse 6.) The length of her sojourn is here called a season, seasons, and half a season; it was called twelve hundred and sixty days in verse 6. The period is in both cases the same in length, viz., three years and a half—*i.e.*, the season (one year), the seasons (two years), and the half season (half a year). This is the period of the Church's trouble and persecution. It is not to be sought by any effort to find some historical period of persecution corresponding in length to this, lasting three years and a half, or twelve hundred and sixty days or years. No such attempt has hitherto been crowned with success. The period is symbolical of the broken time (the half of the seven, the perfect number) of the tribulation of God's people. There may be some future period in which the vision may receive even more vivid fulfilment than it has hitherto received; but the woman has been nourished in the wilderness in the ages that are gone, and her sustenance there by God is an experience of the past, and will be in the future. It is not only in one age, but in every age, that God gives His children bread in the day of adversity, during the season that the pit is being dug for the ungodly. In many an era the servant of God can exclaim: "Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

(15) **And the serpent . . .**— Translate, *And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might make her to be carried away by the river.* The foe of the woman was described as a dragon for his cruelty and fierceness—as a serpent for his subtlety. The first attack on the woman is pictured as persecution by the dragon: from this she escapes by flight; but the subtlety of the enemy finds another device: the foe (now described as a serpent) pours forth water as a river to sweep away the woman. The emblem is not uncommon in the Bible. Invasion is described as "an overflowing flood" (Jer. xlvi. 7, 8; xlvii. 2; comp. Isa. viii. 7, 8). The same emblem is used in Ps. lxxiv. 2—6 to describe the uprising of a people's ill-will. The floods, the rivers, the waves of the sea, are employed to express popular movements. The woman that cannot be destroyed by positive persecution may be swept away by a hostile public opinion. It is not the rulers alone who stand up against the Lord and His Church: an infuriated populace may be stirred up against them. The temper of the mob occasioned as much suffering and as many deaths in early Christian days as did the

cause her to be carried away of the flood. (16) And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (17) And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the com-

political authorities. Ill-regulated popular impulses, leading to violence and unwise action, whether nominally for Christianity or against it, have done enough of the devil's work in the world.

(16) **And the earth . . .**—Translate, *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and drank up the river*, &c. This is generally understood of some earthly power which is raised up to protect the Church against persecution. Just as Persia was raised up to aid Israel after they had been swept away by the flood of Babylonish conquest, so does help come to the persecuted Church through the cultured Roman world, or through some other worldly power, "barbarian and godless in its beginning, but destined in due time to embrace, in name at least, the faith once abhorred, and to introduce that new order of things which should make a nominal Christianity the religion of states and nations, and secure it for ever against the risk of a repetition of bygone persecutions" (Dr. Vaughan). The passage seems to want a wider interpretation. By the flood or river we understand all great popular movements against Christianity: the earth swallows up these; they diffuse themselves for a time, but mother earth absorbs them all, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and no movement hostile to truth can permanently succeed: the eternal laws of truth and right are ultimately found stronger than all the half truths, whole falsehoods, and selfishness which give force to such movements. In a mysterious way, every devil-born flood of opinion, or violence, or sentiment, will sink beneath the surface; they rise like a river, they are tasted, and then rejected. The laws of the earth are against their permanent success. The finest epic of the world might have for its motto: "The earth helped the woman." Creation is ultimately a witness for righteousness and truth. It is not one nation, one age, which is represented here; it is an eternal law.

(17) **And the dragon . . .**—Translate, *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and departed* (not merely "went," but *departed*, as one baffled in his attempt to carry the woman away by the river) *to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.* Omit the word Christ. The attempt to sweep away the Christian Church is vain. The wrath of man has always been found to turn to God's praise; the earth has always helped the woman; out of a thousand seeming defeats the Church of Christ has arisen; the banner of the Lord has been lifted up over every flood. But the foe will not give up his attacks. He can make war upon individual

mandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER XIII.—(1) And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns,

Chap. xiii. 1—10. The great world-power. The first beast-like foe.

Christians; he may cease to assail the collective Church of Christ, but he can assail Christians by a thousand discomforts, by petty opposition, by undermining their morals, by making them unpopular not as Christians, but as "very particular" Christians: for those thus assailed are they who "keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus." It is the old combination of a holy life and a fidelity to their Master which is the test of true loyalty. They take heed to themselves; they abide in Christ; they take heed to the teaching, that Christ's word may abide in them. They keep His word, and they witness to Him in lip and life.

XIII.

This chapter describes the rise of two foes of Christ and His people. They are described as "wild beasts" in opposition to Him who is the Lamb. They are distinct from the dragon; yet they are inspired, as it were, by him. He gives them power (verse 4); his voice speaks through them (verse 11). They are forces and powers utilised by him in hostility to the cause of righteousness and truth. On the whole of this section the parallel vision in Dan. vii. ought to be read.

(1) **And I . . .**—Better, *And he* (not "I stood," as in English version, but *he, i.e.*, the dragon) *stood upon the sand of the sea.* Some make this sentence a separate verse, and insert it as the closing verse of chap. xii. It is true that the sentence has a connection with that chapter, but it is also closely linked with what follows. The way in which the dragon carries out his plan of war is described. Like Milton's "superior fiend," he stands upon the shore and summons his legions (*Par. Lost*, Book I.) to another form of war. Two monsters, one distinguished by more brutal, the other by more subtle power, rise at his bidding.

And saw . . .—Translate, *And I saw a wild beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.*—The wild beast rises out of the sea. In the vision of Daniel (chap. vii.) the beasts rose out of the sea upon which the four winds strove. The sea represents the great, restless mass of human kind; or, as it is expressed in chap. xvii. 15, "peoples and multitudes." St. James represented an undecided man as a wave driven by the wind (Jas. i. 6) The individuals, like larger and smaller waves, make up this great ocean-like mass of men, swayed by impulse or passion. Out of the sea rises a wild beast. The word is not the same as that used in chap. iv. 7 (see Note there), but is a word which implies the pre-

and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name[1] of blasphemy. (2) And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and

[1] Or, *names.*

dominance of the beast nature. Whatever power rises is one which rules not by love or right, but by fear and wilfulness. It is the great force of the world-power, which in every age has been antagonistic to the power of right. The wild beast is always the figure of the kingdoms of this world—*i.e.*, the kingdoms which are founded on passion or selfishness. They are seven in number, as the beast had seven heads. We read afterwards of seven mountains. These world-powers are spoken of as mountains for their strength and stability; as heads of the wild beast because, though separate, they are inspired by the dragon spirit, the spirit of utter enmity to the rule of the Righteous King. The seven kingdoms, or heads of the wild beast, are more distinctly explained in chap. xvii. 10. There we read that five are fallen, one was in possession of power, and the seventh had not yet arisen. The key is thus placed in our hands. The sixth head is imperial Rome, the successor of those great world-powers which were, one and all, founded in unrighteousness—*i.e.*, in violation of the law of brotherly kindness and faith. The heads carry the names of blasphemy. The spirit of arrogant self-sufficiency characterised all the world-powers. Illustrations would be too numerous for our space. It is enough to refer to the spirit in Babylon: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" The words were Nebuchadnezzar's (Dan. iv. 30). He became a beast in uttering them; but the spirit of them went through all the world-powers, from the days of Lamech (Gen. iv. 23, 24) and Babel (Gen. xi. 4) to the days when Roman poets prostituted their pens in abject flattery of emperors, and a degraded people welcomed them as gods, and put those to death who refused to offer frankincense and wine to the images of those who wore the purple.

Ten horns.— The beast has, besides seven heads, ten horns, which are explained further on (chap. xvii. 12) as "the kings which have received no kingdom as yet," but which, when they rise, will draw their strength from the dragon and be members of the wild beast.

(2) **And the beast . . .**—The wild beast combined the features of three wild animals: the leopard, the bear, the lion. In Daniel's vision (Dan. vii. 4) the kingdoms were described: the first, like a lion; the second, like a bear; the third, like a leopard or panther. Here all these features are combined because the wild beast is a representative of all forms of world-power, which have been swift to shed blood: like a leopard leaping on the prey, tenacious and relentless as a bear, and all devouring

his seat, and great authority. [3] And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded [1] to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. [4] And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is*

[1] Gr. *slain.*

(their throat is an open sepulchre) as a lion. The reader will remember the wild beasts which in vision hindered Dante when he sought to ascend the "pleasant mount"—the "cause and source of all delight." The leopard, the lion, the wolf were symbols of luxuriousness, cruel ambition, and hungry and heartless avarice, which oppose men and nations when they seek the Holy Hill, where the light of God ever rests. (Comp. *Inferno*, i. 10—74.)

And the dragon.—Read, *And the dragon gave him his power and his throne* (not his "seat," as in the English version; it is the royal seat, the throne, which is meant). (See Notes on chap. xi. 16 and chap. iv. 4.)

And great authority.—It is through this succession of world-powers that the dragon carries on his war. The wild beast becomes the vicegerent, so to speak, of the prince of this world.

[3] **And I saw . . .**—Translate, *And* (*I saw*) *one from among his heads as if having been slain* [the expression is the same as that applied to the Lamb in chap. v. 6: the wound marks are there when the vision rises] *unto death; and the stroke of his death was healed.* When the wild beast rose from the sea, the seer saw the deadly wound on the head: the wound was really unto death; the beast which had waged war against the true kingdom of righteousness and faith has received his death-blow. This is the historical point from which the vision starts. This being so, the death-blow is that which has just been dealt: the seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head. The blow which casts down the dragon inflicts a deadly wound upon the wild beast, which is his agent. When Christ overthrew the wicked one He gave the death-blow to the world-power—to all systems founded on passion, or self-sufficiency, or inhumanity. But the death-blow is apparently healed. What is this but telling the Church of Christ that the fruits of Christ's victory will not be seen without delay? The world-power is smitten unto death; but the actual death does not follow immediately. The power of evil, contrary to all expectation, rises with new vigour. This revived power showed itself, with more or less force, in the way in which the spirit of the wild beast broke forth when Christianity seemed to have put fetters on the Roman empire.

[3, 4] **And all the world wondered . . .**—Literally, *And the whole earth wondered after the wild beast, and worshipped the dragon, because he gave the authority and worshipped the wild beast, saying, Who is like unto the wild beast? and who is able to war with him?* The healing of the death-blow causes wonder to all. Their wonder leads to worship. The spirit of the wild

like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? (5) And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue [1] forty *and* two months. (6) And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. (7) And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and

[1] Or, *to make war.*

beast is adored wherever worldliness prevails. There is nothing so successful as success, and the homage of men is more often paid to power than to principle. "Who is like unto the beast?" The words are a parody, and a blasphemous parody, on the ascription of praise to God which the name Michael imported. (See chap. xii. 7; comp. Ps. cxii., Mic. vii. 18.) "Who is like unto God?" is the legend of the saints: the opposing cry is, "Who is like unto the beast?"

"Can you not hear the words coming across the centuries from the lips of two Roman youths talking with each other, as they lounge together in the Forum?" (Maurice.) Can we not hear the echo of the words in the Champs Elysées, in Piccadilly, in the Broadway, or Unter Den Linden, from the lips of young men who have taken fashion, rank, wealth, world-power in any shape, as their god?

(5) **And there was given . . .** —In these verses the words and the works of the wild beast are described. The 5th verse tells us that the liberty to speak and work *was given* to him. There is consolation in the words: he has no power beyond what is given; behind his reckless and apparently irresistible power there stands the veiled but real power of God. "Thou couldest have no power" (the saints may take up their Lord's words) "against me, except it were given thee from above." He speaks great things, and blasphemy. *And there was given him authority to act* (literally, *to do*) *forty-two months.* Again the familiar period, the limited time of the world-power.

(6) **And he opened his mouth . . .**—Translate, *And he opened His mouth unto blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that tabernacle in the heaven.* Much of the beauty of the thought is lost by the translation "them that dwell;" the word is *tabernacle.* The saints, to whom the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and who have a tabernacle of witness in this wilderness world, can yet tabernacle their spirits where their treasure is, in the heaven, according to that word: "our citizenship is even now in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). Against these the world-power blasphemes: who has not taken the Lord for his strength, God is not his might; his might is his god. (Comp. Hab. i. 11: "He passes over and is guilty, he whose might is his god.")

(7) **And it was given . . .**—Better, *He makes war with the saints,*

to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. (8) And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (9) If any man have an ear, let him hear. (10) He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he

and conquers them. This, too, is said to be "given him." The conquest is not a conquest of their fidelity; it is rather that the beast so far succeeds that they must suffer or submit. The saints seem to be single-handed; for *there was given him authority over every tribe, and people, and tongues, and nations.* Nor does his success end here; the next verse shows us how completely earth is at his feet.

(8) **And all that dwell . . .**— Better, *And all they that dwell on the earth shall worship him (every one) whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world.* This is the climax of his triumph: he, or it, is worshipped: but the saints, though conquered, conquer; they do not worship after the fashion of the deluded or self-seeking. A stronger tie binds them to a better allegiance; their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life. There is some doubt about the connection of the words "from the foundation of the world." Some connect them with the word "written": this would express that the names were written "from the foundation of the world" in the book. Other connect them with the word "slain": this expresses that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. For the former view, the similar passage in chap. xvii. 8 is cited; but, on the other hand, the phrase "from the foundation of the world" is connected in other parts of the Bible with certain aspects of the work of Christ (1 Pet. i. 19, 20, and John xvii. 24), and it seems more natural to take the words in their simple order. Whatever view we take, the verse proclaims that the security of God's saints is based on the eternal love of God. "An eternal deliverer is the only refuge from this great world-tyranny;" the strength of the tempted is in him who is the same in love and righteousness through all the ages.

(9) This verse—an echo of his Master's words from the lips of the beloved disciple—calls marked attention to the warning words of the next verse.

(10) This verse may read: *If any one (is) for captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any one to be killed by the sword, he should by the sword be killed.* If we read the verse thus, it is generally understood to be a caution to the suffering saints that there is nothing for them but to endure, just as Jeremiah told his countrymen that those who were for death must go out to meet it, and those who were for sword or captivity must face them (Jer. xv. 2). But is not this a warning to

that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the

them that the way of the Church's victory lay through suffering captivity and meeting sword, and that the temptation to take the sword or seize the weapons of their foes would be fatal to their true success? The spirit of the words reminds them that their weapons are the weapons of faith and patience, of truth and righteousness; and they must accept the tribulation, as their Lord did His cross, because thus it must be. At the same time, their very doing so is a witness to their foes that "all those who take the sword will perish with the sword;" and that the sword, from which the saints do not shrink, will assuredly turn against those who use it. *Here* (*i.e.*, in the enduring of these persecutions, and amid so many temptations, not seizing easy, world-like methods of saving themselves) *is the endurance and faith of the saints.*

The Appearance of the Second Wild Beast.

For the understanding of this portion of the vision we must notice the contrasts and resemblances between this and the former wild beast. They are both wild beasts: they both have horns: they both have a dragon-like inspiration (verse 11): they both tyrannise over men; but, on the other hand, the second beast is less monstrous in appearance: we read only of two horns, and we hear nothing of seven heads. He somewhat resembles a lamb; he rises from the earth, and not from the sea; his power lies in deception (verses 13, 14) as well as violence; he seems to possess more supernatural power: yet the whole of his work is directed to magnifying the first beast (verse 12). Do not these features lead to the conclusion that the principles which the second wild beast supports are the same as those on which the former wild beast acted, but that he supports them with more subtlety, intelligence, and culture? But for all the deception he employs, his work, when stripped of its specious drapery and seen in its native ugliness, is to promote the honour of the first wild beast. Because of this seductiveness, and of his efforts to support his mission with higher sanctions (verse 13), he is called in later chapters (chaps. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10) the False Prophet; the force and appropriateness of this designation becomes more apparent when we notice that the features which are assumed bear a deceptive resemblance to those of a lamb. The advancing intelligence of the world, its increase in knowledge and wisdom, the wider diffusion of culture and thought, produce a change in the general fashion of life, but the spirit which animates society is unchanged. The second wild beast is that change which is a change of mode, but not of spirit—a change of manners, but not of heart; there is more refinement, more civilisation, more mind, but it is still the world-power which is worshipped; it is the self-seeking adoration of pleasures, honours, occupations, influences which spring from earth and end in earth—the pursuit of powers which are worldly. Some see in this second

saints. (11) And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. (12) And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to

Chap. xiii. 11—18. The second beast-like foe.

wild beast the Pagan priesthood aiding the imperial power, the embodiment of the first wild beast; others see in it the Papal sacerdotal power, the heir of Pagan rites; others, again, would combine the two, and view this second wild beast as the sacerdotal persecuting power, Pagan and Christian. I believe that, though there is truth in these views, they are too narrow. It is true that priesthoods—Pagan and Christian—have often devoted their influence to the upholding of the great world-power; it is true that men called to be Christian teachers forgot their function, and used their knowledge and power to bolster up the power of the beast and to make men worship the world, as though there were nothing higher for men to worship than this world could afford; it is true that they used, in later days, their powers to aggrandize the Church rather than to reform the world and regenerate men: in so far as they did this they acted like the second wild beast; but the stretch of the vision embraces more than these. All who use their knowledge, their culture, their wisdom to teach men that there is nothing worthy of worship save what they can see, and touch, and taste, are acting the part of the second wild beast; and be they apostles of science, or apostles of culture, or apostles of logical immorality, or apostles of what is called materialism, if their teaching leads men to limit their worship to the visible and the tangible, they are making men worship the beast who is the adversary of the servants of the Lamb.

(11) **And I beheld . . .**—Better, *And I saw another wild beast rising out of the earth.* Both wild beasts rise from beneath. The sea, out of which the first rises, represents the tumultuous impulses and passions of mankind; the earth, the more fixed element of human thought and wisdom, or society consolidated and disciplined by intelligence and culture: the wisdom, however, which guides this wild beast is not divine wisdom, but that wisdom which a sacred writer described as earthly, sensual, devilish (Jas. iii. 17).

He had two horns like (*those of*) **a lamb.**—There is an appearance of gentleness about him, but he spake as a dragon; the voice betrayeth him. He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth. The spirit of the adversary is in him (John iii. 31; viii. 44).

(12) **And he exerciseth . . .** —Better, *And he works*, or *exercises* (literally, *does*), *all the authority* (or, *power*) *of the first wild beast in his presence.* It will be seen by this that we must not look upon the second wild beast as a successor, but rather as a supporter, of the

worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. (13) And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, (14) and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. (15) And he had power to give life[1] unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and

[1] Gr. *breath.*

---

first. The intellectual force of an earthly wisdom is practically subservient to the spirit of unmitigated worldliness.

(12, 13) **And causeth the earth . . .**—Literally, *and he makes the earth and them that dwell in it that they shall worship the first wild beast, the stroke of whose death was healed; and he does signs great, so that he even makes fire to descend out of the heaven to the earth in the sight of men.* This descent of fire is the counterpart of the work of the two witnesses (chap. xi. 5), and of Elijah in Old Testament days. It is one of the features of that deceivableness of unrighteousness which misleads man. There is a holy fire which inspires the lips and hearts of the holy; there is an unhallowed fire, a fire of mere power, which the worldly spirit is tempted to worship.

(14) **And deceiveth them . . .**—Better, *And he leads astray those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which were given him to do in the presence of the wild beast; saying to those who dwell on the earth, to make an image to the wild beast that has the stroke of the sword and lived.* He leads astray: this is the key to his success, he deifies the spirit of worldliness; but he does it by deception and subtlety; there is an appearance of wonderful power: he can work lying wonders. When men lose the sense of duty, —the will to ask, "Is it right?"— they become an easy prey to some specious deception. This is the reason that, both in the old and new dispensations, a caution against "immoral marvels" is entered (see Deut. xiii. 1—3; Matt. xxiv. 24; and 2 Thess. ii. 9); mere greatness, either of achievement or of miracle, is no guarantee of a good cause. The motto "Might is right" is the motto of worldliness; "Right is might" is the motto of faith, and those who hold it cannot worship the beast, even though the stroke of his death-wound is healed. Men have appealed to lying miracles on behalf of a death-wounded creed: the cleverness of self-interested partizanship is seldom barren of imposing expedients.

(15) **And he had power . . .**—Better, *And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the wild beast, that the image of the wild beast should both speak, and cause that as many as do not worship the*

cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. (16) And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive[1] a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: (17) and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark,

[1] Gr. *to give.*

image of the wild beast shall be slain. The image to the wild beast is an image also of the wild beast: and the image of the monster is endued with apparent vitality. Wisdom can give a semblance of life to the most doomed cause; and the bulk of mankind read only with their eyes, and not at all with their thoughts. The image of the Roman emperor was, in ancient days, made an object of worship. Christians suffered rather than by such an act of worship prove disloyal to Christ; like their spiritual ancestors, they refused to worship the image which the world-power had set up; they were willing to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, but the homage which belonged to God they refused to any but their God. These are but types of those who have refused, though tempted by specious eloquence and sagacious subtlety, to offer homage to any mere world-power; for the golden image is ever set up upon the plains of this world; its glitter and its vitality survive the storm and the conflict of the ages: it speaks, and men hear and adore, for they walk by sight, not by faith; and it needs no imperial or papal edict to doom to social death and failure those who refuse to shape their conduct by considerations of self-interest, and who are sure to be treated as fanatics because they follow right and conscience and Christ.

(16, 17) **And he causeth . . .**— Better, *And he* [*i.e.*, probably, the second wild beast, and not the image, as in the latter clause of the last verse] *makes all men, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that they should give them a mark upon their right hand or upon their forehead: (and) that no one should be able to buy or to sell but he who has the mark, the name of the wild beast, or the number of his name.* We have read of the sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads (chap. vii. 3): we shall hear of it again (chap. xxii. 4); the power of evil also has its mark or stamp. As slaves received a brand or mark in their flesh, betokening to whom they belonged, so in the spiritual conflict there is on the side of good and of evil a brand or mark. St. Paul spoke of such marks in his own body that proved him a slave of Jesus Christ (Gal. vi. 17). In the same way the subtle false prophet, the abettor of world-power, seeks to impress a mark on all, on the penalty of complete social exclusion. It is utterly unnecessary to take this brand of evil literally, any more than we took the seal of Christ literally. That seal we understood as spiritual, in the faith and in the character; this evil brand we must interpret in like manner. It surely means the acquiescence in character and action to the principles of this tyrannical

or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

(18) Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understand-

world-power: the right hand is the symbol of toil and social intercourse: the forehead is the symbol of character, as time is ever writing its awful tale upon men's brows. There have been days when men's faith has been read only too plainly by a hostile world, and when their simple trust in Christ caused Christians to be suspected, and when "men cast out their name as evil," and when the mark of the beast was worn and gloried in everywhere. We might cite from the history of the past numberless such epochs. But are we sure that the days are gone? Are we sure that it is easy for simple, unaffected goodness and genuine faith to gain all it might gain? Are we sure that honesty, guilelessness, utter and strenuous truthfulness are not weighted in the race of life? The days of the future may bring intenser forms of this tyranny, as the days of the past have shown them; but the days of the present may afford us illustrations of how readily men may lose, lose much and lose terribly, rather than succumb to fashions which violate honour and dishonour Christ. But we read of more than a mark here: we read of a "name," and the "number of a name." What are we to understand by these?

(18) **Here is wisdom . . .**—Translate, *Hither is wisdom.* This most difficult verse is introduced by this word of preface. Wisdom —indeed, the highest wisdom—is needed for those who would understand it. Two or three points ought to be noticed. (1) The verse surely implies that the understanding of this name and number is attainable; it warns us that *wisdom* and *understanding* are needed, but it as certainly leads us to believe that to wisdom and understanding a solution of the problem will be granted. (2) There is a variation in the MSS. respecting the number. Some MSS. read six hundred and sixteen; but the probability is in favour of the reading six hundred and sixty-six. In an excursus (*Excursus B*) will be found a short account of the various interpretations which have been given. (3) The clause "It is the number of a man," has been rendered "For number is of man." The number, then, is the combination of three sixes; there is a wisdom and understanding which may grasp its import, and that import is to be guided by the principle that it is the number of a man, or that number is of man—is, that is to say, a method of computation which is used by man, and used by God in order to symbolise something made thus more intelligible to man. Is the wisdom which is to solve this, then, the mere cleverness which can guess an acrostic or an enigma? or is it rather that the true heavenly wisdom, which is moral rather than intellectual, is needed to unite itself with understanding to solve the problem? Surely the dignity of the Apocalypse is sacrificed when we search for its meaning like children playing with conundrums rather than like men being guided by its principles. There is a wisdom which brings

ing count the number of | | the beast: for it is the

its sevenfold beam of heavenly light to the children of men—a wisdom pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality, without hypocrisy—and when this wisdom rests on men in the fulness of its seven-fold perfection, they may read the number of the beast, and see that, with all its vaunted strength, it is but weak; with all its vaunted perfection, it is imperfect; that though it vaunts itself as rich, increased in goods and needing nothing, it still lacks that "one needful thing"—faith in God, or the love by which faith works. Without this it will never attain even the appearance of that perfect heavenly number symbolised by seven; it may multiply itself in earthly strength — the power of worldliness into the power of worldly wisdom, and this again by the power of a hundredfold satanic subtlety—but it will remain still short of the tokens of the kingdom of God; and the number when read will be, however godlike it looks, but the number of a man after all.

I am disposed, therefore, to interpret this "six hundred and sixty-six" as a symbolical number, expressing all that it is possible for human wisdom, and human power, when directed by an evil spirit, to achieve, and indicating a state of marvellous earthly perfection, when the beast-power has reached its highest development, when culture, civilisation, art, song, science and reason have combined to produce an age so nearly resembling perfection—an age of gold, if not a golden age—that men will begin to say that faith in God is an impertinence, and the hope of a future life a libel upon the happiness of the present. Then will the world-power have reached the zenith of his influence; then will only a wisdom descended from above be able to detect the infinite difference between a world with faith and a world without faith, and the great gulf which the want of a little heaven-born love can fix between an age and an age.

At the same time, I feel bound to place here, as well as in the *Excursus*, two other views—one because it has recently been advanced with conspicuous ability; the other because it is perhaps the most generally adopted, as it is certainly the most ancient, view. Both these interpretations are based upon the theory that the letters of the name, when added together, according to their numerical value, will make up six hundred and sixty-six. The first of these alluded to finds the word in Nero Cæsar. The second, and more ancient, finds it in Lateinos: this last was mentioned by Irenæus. It will be seen that both these solutions are at one in making the number point to the great Roman Power; and this was the great embodiment of the terrible spirit of self-sufficiency, tyranny, and utter godless worldliness with which St. John was familiar. These interpretations are interpretations in example, and as such probably true; but they are only types, as it seems to me, of that fuller and deeper view which takes the number as symbolical of that power which, whether directed by Nero, or in-

number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six.

CHAPTER XIV.—(1) And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's

A.D. 96.

Chap. xiv. 1—5. The camp of the Lamb.

spired by Emperor or Pope, or false teacher, or military tyrant, has dazzled mankind by a fictitious glory, a fictitious civilisation, and a fictitious religion, or deceived them by holding out the promise of splendour and happiness without the knowledge and obedience of God, without law, without faith, and therefore without true joy. (Comp. Note of the "Three Frogs," chap. xvi. 13, 14.)

XIV.

We have had before us the terrible foes which the cause of Christ and His righteousness must encounter in the world. We have seen the subtle spirit of the evil one defeated, yet plotting new methods of assault, and utilising the powers of the world, its sheer force and its culture, to crush holiness and to destroy spiritual religion. The whole vision reminds us that our conflict is not with flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness (Eph. vi. 12). We have seen the spiritual issues which are at stake. In all the outward forms which the conflict may assume there is but one inward spiritual antagonism—the spirit of evil against the spirit of good, the god of this world against the Christ of God. We have seen this power of evil rise to its blasphemous climax. But what has the Church of Christ been doing? The sealed ones of God have suffered; but have they done more than suffer? Has theirs been only a passive endurance of evils? Have they wielded no weapons against these foes, and used no counter-influence for good? The chapter before us will answer. In it the sacred seer takes us from our survey of the powers of evil, and shows us the powers of good. We have seen the strength of the wild beast: we may now see the followers of the Lamb. In the chapter there are seven messengers, or agents, employed, who prepare for or complete the harvest: the angel of good news (ver. 6, 7); the angel proclaiming the doom of the great world city (ver. 8); the angel who warns men against the mark of the wild beast (ver. 9—12); the angel of comfort (ver. 13); the angel of the wheat harvest (ver. 14—16); the angel of the vintage (ver. 17—20); the angel of fire (ver. 18). But before these we are shown a vision of the servants of the Lamb.

The Citadel of the Saints and the Servants of the Lamb.

(1) **And I looked . . .**—Better, *And I saw, and, behold, the Lamb* (not "a Lamb:" it is *the* Lamb, the true Lamb of God, against whom the wild beast wages savage and subtle war) *standing on the Mount Sion.* The Saviour, the Lamb, in whose blood the saints

name written in their foreheads. (2) And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: (3) and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. (4) These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they

have found their victory, is seen standing on the citadel of the heavenly city. Babylon is to be introduced (verse 8). In contrast, Zion, the chosen abode of God (Ps. cxxxii. 13—18), the type of the spiritual city whose citizens are true to the king (comp. Ps. ii. 6, lxxiv. 2; Heb. xii. 22—24), is introduced. There are to be seen the Lamb, set as King upon the holy hill of Zion, and with Him the sealed ones, His faithful soldiers and servants. They are described as 144,000 in number: a number which represents the full growth of the choice ones of God, the true Israel of God. (See Note on chap. vii. 4.) These have their Father's name on their foreheads: they can be recognised as children of God. (Comp. Note on chap. vii. 2, 3, and chap. xxii. 4.)

(2) **And I heard a voice . . .** —Translate, *And I heard a voice out of the heaven.* The saints stand with their Lord, the Lamb, on Mount Zion, and just as of old a voice came from heaven bearing witness to Christ, so round the abode of the saints heavenly voices are heard, full of majesty, terribleness, and sweetness, as though the sounds of sea and thunder blended with the music of heavenly harps. We call to mind the magnificent 29th Psalm; there the saints, secure in Zion, hear all around them the voice of God in the thunder and in the sea, while in His safe sanctuary the saints can sing of His honour.

(3) **And they . . .**—Translate, *And they* (*i.e.*, the heavenly harpers) *sing a new song* (the words "as it were" ought, perhaps, to be omitted) *before the throne, and before the living creatures, and the elders* (*i.e.*, in the presence of God Himself, and creation, and the Church), *and no one was able to learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth.* It is a heavenly song and no spirit dulled by earthly desires can learn it. The Spirit of the Lord can open the dull ear to hear and to rejoice in the songs of God's saints. Amid the world-noises of Babylon men can neither hear nor sing aright the Lord's song (Ps. cxxxvii. 4); but the redeemed (the purchased from the earth) of the Lord can come with singing unto Zion (Isa. li. 11).

(4, 5) **These are they . . .**—The characteristics of the servants of the Lamb are given in this verse and the following. The first is *purity:* they are virgins. The

which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed [1] from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. (5) And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

[1] Gr. *were bought.*

(6) And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and

Chap. xiv. 6—13. The four celestial voices.

---

expression can hardly be limited to the unmarried, as the 144,000 represent the wide society of the choice ones of God. They are those whose hearts have been made as the hearts of little children (Matt. xviii. 1—4), who have that purity of heart which Christ declared to be blessed, and which St. James declared to be the first mark of heavenly wisdom (Matt. v. 8, and Jas. iii. 17). The next is *implicit obedience:* they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Some, indeed, take this to be a kind of heavenly reward: they shall be the nearer companions of the Lamb. But it is better to take it as describing their complete consecration to Christ. They are those who are with Christ, who have tasted the cup that their Lord tasted, and have taken up their cross and followed Him (Matt. xx. 22; Luke xiv. 27; John xii. 24—26). It is well to weigh these words; it is in the "wheresoever" that we may test the reality of our Christian life. Here lies the cross that Christ bids us take up. Here is the echo of Christ's words, "Whosoever forsaketh not all he hath cannot be My disciple." The third mark is *separation*, or unworldliness: they were purchased from among men as a firstfruit to God and to the Lamb. They were a chosen generation, a peculiar people (Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 9), as the Israel of God (Deut. vii. 6). The fourth feature is *utter truthfulness:* in their mouth no guile or no falsehood. (Comp. Ps. xiv. and Deut. xxxii. 1, 2.) The verse emphatically ends with "They are blameless." The words "before the throne of God" must be omitted. (Comp. chap. vii. 14, 15; Eph. v. 27; and Col. i. 22.)

We have seen the servants of God; we have marked their character; we are now to see the weapon which is to be employed in the conflict against the enemies of Christ.

(6) **And I saw . . .**—Better, *And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an everlasting gospel, to declare glad tidings over them that sit on the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people.* In view of the world the gospel is proclaimed; this is the good news, that God loves the world, has redeemed mankind, that they belong to Him. This word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and the weapon (not carnal) which the Church uses against her foes. It is represented as in the hand of an angel rising in view of all nations: "The sound has gone out unto all lands."

tongue, and people, (7) saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.[a] (8) And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,[b] that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the

[a] Ps. 1. 46. 5; Acts 14. 15.

[b] Isa. 21. 9; Jer. 5. 8; ch. 18. 2.

(7) **Saying . . .**—These words declare what ought to be the effect of the gospel. Those to whom it is preached are sitting inactive on the earth. They must be roused to fear God and give Him glory. They must not fear the powers of evil, the wild beasts, &c., or be afraid of their terror (1 Pet. iii. 14, 15). They must realise that there is an hour of judgment at hand, which will discriminate between the worshippers of the world and of God. Let them learn to worship the Creator of all, and to turn from the worship of lesser and lower.

If we ask when this gospel angel appeared, our answer must be that the whole cycle of the gospel preaching is included in the vision, though doubtless there have been ages when the light of the glad tidings of God has gone forth with revived lustre, and when the warnings against easy acquiescence in evil have been given with unmistakable distinctness.

(8) **And there followed . . .**—The gospel angel is followed by the angel that proclaims the downfall of Babylon. Better, *And another, a second, angel followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who has given all the nations to drink of*, &c. The second angel follows on the first: the doom of the world-city, the metropolis of the empire of the world-power, follows the proclamation of the gospel. The principles of Christ's gospel must undermine the world-power; the fall of some Babylon principle has almost always succeeded the age of spiritual revival. Pagan Rome goes down before the gospel. Civil freedom follows the wake of religious freedom, for Babylon belongs not to one age. Pagan Rome was Babylon to St. John; papal Rome was often Babylon to a later age. Dante, Savonarola, Tauler, Luther, felt her to be so in the days when their eyes were enlightened; but Babylon was not on the Euphrates alone: she has reared palaces on the Seine, and on the Thames, Tiber, and on the Bosphorus. She may yet erect her power in more imposing form; but faith in that gospel which is the power of God will cast her down along with everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. The influence of Babylon is declared in this: that she has given all nations to drink of deadly wine—the wine alike of her sin and of her doom, of her fornication and of the wrath which will overtake it. Babylon, then, is clearly an emblem of some principles which have been more or less accepted by all nations, and which will more or less involve all in the consequences of her fall. (Comp. chaps. xvi. 19, and xvii., where the features of

wrath of her fornication. (9) And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, (10) the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels; and in the presence of the Lamb: (11) and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his

---

this Babylon are more fully developed.)

(9) **And the third angel . . .** —Better, *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying in a loud voice, If any man worship the wild beast and his image, and a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, he also himself shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled pure* (in full strength, undiluted, *e.g.*, "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy," Jas. ii. 13) *in the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented in fire*, &c., &c. This third angel naturally follows the other two, which describe the powers which are in conflict: the word of God, and the Babylon of the world; the Gospel will triumph; Babylon is doomed; hence comes the warning that men should not identify themselves with the city of worldliness, falsehood, and sin. The reference to the wild beast, the image, and the mark, carries us back to the last chapter, and shows us that Babylon is only another aspect of the work of God's enemies: it is the city of the world-power. The warning not to receive the mark is a declaration that man, individual man, is responsible: there is no necessity for his receiving the mark, the hall-mark of a cowardly connivance at wrong-doing, or for setting his judgments by the fashions of the world.

(11) **For ever and ever.** —Or, *unto ages of ages.* The imagery of the smoke going up reminds us of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 28; comp. Isa. xxxiv. 10). *They have not rest by day and by night who worship the wild beast*, &c. Sin, which is first embraced as a delight, becomes soon an inexorable tyrant, by an awful retribution compelling men along the routine of the evil habits which they loathe while they long for, and long for even while they loathe them: there is a destiny of unrest in all sin. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest." It is well that solemn words like these should be read by the light of the most certain of all truths—the power sin has of stamping its indelible features upon the human character, and giving to habit the force of a destiny.

name. (12) Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (13) And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit,[1] that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. (14) And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown,

[1] Or, *from henceforth saith the Spirit, Yea.*

Chap. xiv. 14—16. The harvest.

(12) **Here is the patience . . .** —Translate, *Here is the patience of the saints* (not "here are they," but) *who keep*, &c. In this readiness to wait to endure through much tribulation to the end, is the patience of the saints seen. There is a patient waiting for Christ shown by those who keep God's commandments, who cleave to righteousness in spite of much temptation, and who refuse to pay homage to the god of this world because firm in the faith that Jesus is King.

(13) **And I heard a voice . . .** —Translate, *And I heard a voice out of the heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, in that they shall rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.* We are not told whose voice speaks, but it proclaims a blessing on (not only martyrs, but) those who die in the Lord, in happy union and fellowship with Him (John xv. 2—5; 1 John i. 3); such are happy, for they rest from toil, and their works of faith, and labours of love (even if only the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of Christ) follow with them into the presence of their Lord (Matt. x. 41, 42; Heb. vi. 10). The words "from henceforth" form a difficulty; the reason for their introduction is to be found in the state of trouble which the last verses describe: the righteous are happy in being taken away from the evil to come. Or may it be that the words are designed to console the mourners in an age when dark unbelief robs away the sweet resurrection trust, and writes over its graves, "Farewell for ever"? If the climax of world-power should be bitter scorn of the idea of a life to come, and complacent satisfaction with a portion in this world, then words of faith, proclaiming that the dead are happy and restful, and that their work is not in vain in the Lord, may find new force to sustain a fainting courage or a wavering trust.

THE HARVEST.

(14) **And I looked . . .**—Better, *And I saw, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one seated like to a son of man, having upon his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.* There can be little doubt that Christ Himself is here intended: the "cloud" (Matt. xxiv. 30; Acts i. 9), the expression "Son of man" (comp. John v. 27

and in his hand a sharp sickle. (15) And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.[1] [a] (16) And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. (17) And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having

[1] Or, *dried.* [a] Joel 3. 13.

Chap. xiv. 17—20. The vintage.

---

and Dan. vii. 13), the "crown," the general resemblance to the vision in chap. i. (see chap. i. 7—13), indicate as much. The "crown" is the crown of victory; the hour of conquest is at hand. The sickle shows that the harvest has come. (Comp. Joel iii. 12—14 and Mark iv. 26—29.)

(15) **And another angel . . .** —Translate, *And another angel came forth out of the temple*, &c. It has been asked, "What harvest is this?" It is the gathering of the good seed, the full corn in the ear, into the celestial garner (Mark iv. 26—29). The angel who announces that the harvest is ready comes forth from the Temple, the inner shrine, the holy place, which was measured off in the sanctuary of the faithful (chap. xi. 1); whereas the angel who calls for the vintage comes forth from the altar (verse 18).

The angel cries—*Put forth* (or, *send*) *thy sickle and reap, because the hour is come to reap, because the harvest of the earth is ripe* (or, *dried*); the wheat stalks are dry, and the fields white for harvest (John iv. 35). The sickle was put in: the earth was reaped.

THE VINTAGE.

There must be some difference between the vintage and the harvest. There is an autumn gladness about the harvest: there are tokens of judgment in the vintage. It is not the sharp sickle alone which is required: the winepress of God's wrath is called into use. An angel from the Temple calls to the Son of man to reap the harvest: an angel from the altar calls to an angel from the Temple to gather in the vintage. The vintage symbolises a harvest of judgment; do not the words respecting Babylon (the wine of the wrath of her fornication, verse 8) come to the mind and confirm this? The angel rises from the altar, beneath which the murdered saints had cried, "How long?" and proclaims "The vintage, the hour of vengeance has come!" And it is not without significance that the angel to whom this cry is addressed comes forth out of the Temple, the safe sanctuary of God's faithful ones, as one who has witnessed their secret sorrows and their sufferings, and is fitted "to recompense tribulation to the troublers of Israel" (2 Thess. i. 6).

(17) **And another angel . . .** —Translate, *And another angel, . . . having himself also* (as well as the Son of man, verse 14) *a sharp sickle.*

a sharp sickle. [18] And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. [19] And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. [20] And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER XV.— [1] And I saw another sign

---

[18] **And another angel . . .** —Translate, *And another angel, . . . he who hath authority over the fire.* The two scenes—one in chap. vi. 9, 10 (the souls crying beneath the altar), the other in chap. viii. 5, (the angel mingling incense with the prayers of the saints)—must be remembered. The angel who had charge of the altar fire, and flung the ashes betokening judgments towards the earth, calls with a loud cry, *Send thy sharp sickle, and gather the bunches of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.*

[19, 20] **And the angel . . .**— The vine (*i.e.*, the vintage of the vine), when gathered, is cast into *the winepress of the wrath of God, the great* (*winepress*). *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came forth blood out of the winepress as far as the bridles of the horses, from a thousand six hundred furlongs* (stadii). The outflow of the blood of the grapes pressed reached over a distance of sixteen hundred stadii. The treading of the winepress was a figure representing vengeance; the red juice of the grape strongly suggested the shedding of blood. (Comp. Isa. lxiii. 2—4.) The winepresses stood usually outside the city: it is so represented here, not without an allusion to those who fall under the weight of this judgment because they have refused the defence of the true city and sanctuary. (Comp. verse 1 and Ps. cxxxii. 17, 18.) The distance (sixteen hundred stadii), *i.e.*, four multiplied into itself and then multiplied by a hundred, is symbolical (such seems the most probable meaning) of a judgment complete and full, and reaching to all corners of the earth—"the whole world, of which Satan is called the prince, is judged, and condemned, and punished" (Dr. Currey). In the vintage and harvest is a piercing discrimination between the faithful fruit-bearing children of the King and the cowardly or selfish, whose hearts are for self and not for Christ, but who yield themselves servants to sin.

XV.

[1] **And I saw another sign**

in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. (2) And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the

Chap. xv. 1—8. In preparation for the plagues, the Temple of God is closed.

---

in (*the*) **heaven.**—The sign is, as we noticed before (chap. xii. 1), a token, not a mere empty wonder. This sign is called "great and marvellous;" it introduces a new set of scenes; the same characters will reappear, but we must start with fresh attention.

The seer sees *seven angels* (not "the seven angels;" it is perfectly needless to ask what angels, or to try and identify them with the trumpet angels) *having seven plagues, the last, because in them is completed the wrath of God.* The statement that these are the *last* plagues seems to show that the set of visions now commencing carry us down to the end of the age; there are no other plagues after these: they are the last plagues; the vials, like the seals and the trumpets, run up to the final consummation. They are plagues; the word carries us back to Egypt: on Egypt fell the ten plagues which showed forth God's righteous power, and exposed the hollow pretensions of the magicians and their gods; the wild beast-power and the false prophet-power of that day was crippled and exposed. In like manner upon the wild beast-power of later ages the plagues of God fall. They are plagues because they are sent forth, not like the trumpets to warn men to repent, but upon those who have obstinately refused to return; they are not goads to the wavering, but they are strokes upon the wilful and hardened; they are directed against those who are deliberately hostile.

(2) **And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire.**—The wild beast rose out of the sea (chap. xiii. 1); the evil-hearted woman sits upon many waters (chap. xvii. 1); they draw strength from the wild, and ungoverned, and short-sighted impulses of human passion; in opposition to this, near the throne of God is the calm and translucent sea of God's counsels of righteousness and love, now clear as crystal, now ruddy with the fire of righteous indignation, the expression of His eternal will against sin. Such is the appearance of this glass-like sea now that the angels of the plagues are going forth.

But the seer saw more than this fire-flushed sea. He saw also those that are victorious over the wild beast. These he describes (such is the literal translation) as *those who conquer out of the wild beast*, &c.; they come off conquerors out of the struggle, and they escape from the temptation to worship his image and wear the badge of his service: they "escape victorious from" his image and from his mark. When he sees these, they

number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. (3) And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God,[a] and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways,

[a] Ex. 15. 1.

are *standing upon* (*i.e.*, on the shore of) *the sea of glass, holding harps of God.* We have had the harps mentioned previously (chaps. v. 8, and xiv. 2); it is appropriate. The life which has been a discord to the world rises into true music before God; those who will make their life a melody must take it first as a conflict. The harps they hold are called harps of God, not merely because they are dedicated to Him, but because they are truly God's. All the most glorious and noble things in nature were named God's; the lofty trees were "trees of God"; the high-piled mountains were "mountains of God"; so also the harps which strike forth the richest music are "harps of God." Nor is this a mere phrase to be considered as equivalent to very great or very glorious; great and glorious the trees, hills, and harps are, but only a prosaic or a profane mind can be satisfied with such a naked equivalent. The godly saw the hand of God in these things; and St. John knows that the noblest melody in the ears of God is the noble life of faith, suffering, and love. The power of such a life is in God, not in itself (John xv. 5; Gal. ii. 20), and the music of such a life is music which God makes (2 Cor. iv. 7—10), drawing the sweetest tones from the strings which are smitten with pain and sorrow; and as its life's music is God-taught, so does its song of triumph sound from a harp not its own, but God's. If our power to sing in trial here a song worthy of God is only found in God, so will the songs of heaven be sweet only in Him, for those who dwell there shall be all taught of Him.

(3) **And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.**—They join their voices to the music of their harps. The song of Moses was a pæan of victory over Pharaoh and his hosts (Ex. xiv. 26—31, and xv. 1—21). Israel stood on the margin of the Red Sea and saw the tokens of the overthrow of the great world-power of that day; so these saints stand by the border of the fire-blent sea of glass, and sing the song of triumph over the doom of the great world-powers of every age. The cases are parallel, the songs are alike; and it would not be out of place were the words of that other song of Moses, the man of God, to be heard from those who are made glad according to the days of their affliction, and who are clothed with the beauty of the Lord their God (Ps. xc. 1, 15, 17). They also sing the song of the Lamb. The Apocalypse is full of Christ; the Lamb is the axis on which the world of its scenery moves; He is the key of earth's history; the victory of the saints is in Him (chap. xii. 11); their song of triumph is of Him who put a new song in their mouth, and in whom all things are

thou King of saints. [4] Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? [a] for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before

[a] Jer. 10. 7.

reconciled (Eph. i. 10; Phil. ii. 10, 11).

(3, 4) **Great and marvellous are thy works . . .** The *song* is better thus translated:—

"Great and marvellous are Thy works,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify
Thy name?
Because Thou only art holy:
Because all the nations shall come and
worship in Thy presence:
Because Thy judgments were manifested."

The works are called "great:" the "ways" are called just and true. It is not mere marvel which calls forth the song of praise, but righteousness, truth, and holiness. The Almighty is the righteous ruler. The English version has "King of saints;" the reading should be "King of *the nations*," or else, perhaps, "King of *the ages*." The latter reading harmonises well with the immediate context and with the other passages, which link the thought of "the ages" with the "righteous dealings" of God. "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Ps. cxix. 142; comp. also verses 144, 151, 152, 160). But the former is to be preferred; it is appropriate in a song which celebrates a victory over those who vaunted themselves as the princes of this world, and which proclaims the submission of the nations to God; and it seems to have been transplanted here from Jeremiah (x. 7): "Who would not fear thee, thou King of the nations?" The song celebrates the noble acts of the Lord; it declares them to be great; but it is not their greatness, it is their righteousness and faithfulness which calls forth the grateful praise. The long days of oppression, and the seeming silence of the Almighty, when the prayer and cry "How long?" has risen from perplexed and suffering saints, have brought the temptation of the psalmist: "I have cleansed my heart in vain" Ps. lxxiii. 3—13). But now the righteous acts of the Lord are manifested: now it is acknowledged that "verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. viii. 11). Though clouds and darkness have sometimes been round about Him, it is now beyond doubt that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvii. 2).

(4) **Who shall not fear . . .**—Rather, *Who will not fear*, &c. (the word "Thee" should be omitted, *because Thou art holy*. The word rendered "holy" is not that which is usually employed when the holiness of God is spoken of; it is a word which, when applied to men, denotes one who reverences the sacred obligations of natural and moral order, apart from the thought of mere law or custom. The word is applied here, and in chap. xvi. 5, to God, and denotes the recognition of those sacred obligations which the character of God, if I may say so with reverence, imposes upon Himself. It is the remem-

thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (5) And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

" and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden

brance that God will, as Judge of all the earth, do right, and will vindicate the expectations of those who stay themselves upon His character, which generates a holy fear of Him.

All nations shall come and worship . . .—Translate, *All the nations worship, because Thy judgments* (or, *righteous acts*) *are manifested.* The song is one in anticipation. The angels of judgment are going forth; the righteous dealings of God will be seen; but these things are spoken of as though accomplished: their completion is a divine certainty.

(5) **And after that . . .**—Better, *And after these things I saw, and there was opened the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony* (or, *witness*) *in the heaven.* This temple is called the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony; the expression sounds cumbrous, but it is nevertheless suitable. St. Stephen spoke of "the tabernacle of witness" in the wilderness, which was made after the pattern showed in the mount (Acts vii. 44). The tabernacle was well called the tabernacle of witness, for it contained the ark of the testimony with the Law of God, and was a perpetual witness of God's presence among His people. The temple of the tabernacle, then, is the shrine, or inner sanctuary, of the heavenly true tabernacle, after the pattern of which the tabernacle of Moses was fashioned, which is now opened.

(6) **And the seven angels . . .**—Better, *And there came out the seven angels who had the seven plagues from the temple, clothed in linen, pure, glistening, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles.* The temple is the inner shrine, or sanctuary; it was this which was measured (chap. xi. 1); it was out of this that the angel with the sharp sickle came for the vintage of the earth (chap. xiv. 7); out of this now came the seven angels with the seven plagues. It is well to remember this, for these plagues are not, like the judgments of the trumpet, calls to repentance; they are plagues on those who have refused to return, who have rejected the sanctuary, the tabernacle of witness, which the Lord pitched among men, and who have refused, like obstinate builders, the stone which has become the head of the corner. Out of the rejected temple the angels of wrath come; it is ever true that out of rejected mercies the heaviest of plagues are forged. The angels are clad in a garb resembling that of Christ (chap. i. 13); they are come forth to do His bidding; they are clothed in raiment which indicates their righteous errand. (Comp. chap. xix. 8; Acts i. 10, and x. 30.) Instead of *linen*, some MSS. have "a stone:" the angels, according to this, were "clad in a stone, pure, brilliant." There is a

girdles. (7) And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. (8) And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

---

parallel thought in Ezekiel, who describes the splendour of the King of Tyre: "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond," &c. (chap. xxviii. 13).

(7) **And one of the four . . .** —Better, *And one from among the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden vials* (or, *bowls*) *full*, &c. The vials are the shallow bowls which were used for incense. They are filled with the wrath of God, and that wrath is now to be poured out "upon the kingdoms that have not called upon God's name" (Ps. lxxix. 6). These vials are given by one of the living creatures who represent creation; it is thus through creation that the wrath of God can visit the rebellious; that wrath of God is simply the operation of God's righteous law against sin. His statutes are eternally righteous. He has given to all things a law which cannot be broken; that law is adverse to evil, and will in the end root it out, for it does the bidding of God, who lives unto the ages of the ages.

(8) **And the temple . . .**— Translate, *And the temple* (the same word—*naos*—is used as in chap. xi. 1) *was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His might; and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.* As in the wilderness (Ex. xl. 34, 35), and as at the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings viii. 10, 11), the tokens of God's presence filled the temple, so it is now, but with a difference: it is smoke, not cloud, which is the symbol of God's presence. But the vision which, perhaps, under all circumstances, most nearly corresponds with the present, is that of Isaiah (chap. vi.); there the prophet beheld the vision of God. His train filled the temple, and the house was filled with smoke, and a message of judgment was given to the prophet; that message declared that the sin of the people had reached a climax: they had trifled with convictions, and henceforward the words of God's servants would harden rather than awaken them. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," &c. (Isa. vi. 9, 10), till the desolating judgments had fallen. The general drift of the present vision is similar; the days of warning are over: the plagues which now fall will fall on those who have trifled with convictions: the sanctuary which was opened as a refuge is now closed: none can enter till the plagues have descended. The time has come when the judgments of God fail to stir the conscience which has been deadened by sin;

CHAPTER XVI.— (1) And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (2) And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image. (3) And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man:*

A.D. 96.

Chap. xvi. 2. The first vial.

Chap. xvi. 3. The second vial.

---

the day when the gracious influences towards repentance were felt has passed. The word that has been spoken is about to descend in judgment (John vii. 48). "Who shall not pray, with an agony of earnestness, From hardness of heart and contempt of Thy word and commandment, good Lord, deliver us?" (Dr. Vaughan).

XVI.

The Seven Vials.

(1) **And I heard . . .**—A great voice is heard out of the temple; it bids the angels pour out their vials "into the earth;" later on (verse 17) the voice is heard saying, "It is done." The voice is then said to come from the throne; it seems likely that the voice of the first verse is the same—the divine voice from the throne itself.

(2) **And the first . . .**—Translate, *And the first went forth*, &c. The angel which receives the command departs and pours forth his vial upon the earth. All the vials are poured forth "into the earth" (verse 1) generally; the first angel pours his vial forth upon the earth, that is, the dry land. *And there came an evil and painful sore upon the men* (*i.e.*, upon that part of the human race) *who*, &c. The plague falls on those who carry the mark of the beast, and who worship it. Like the plagues of Egypt, *they* are directed against those who aid the oppressor. The plague here described resembles the sixth of the Egyptian plagues, the plague of boils (comp. Ex. ix. 8—12; Deut. xxviii. 27). Egypt is one type of the world-power; and the plagues are used as types also, and are not to be understood literally. The plague of the "evil sore" denotes some throbbing and hateful sore, perhaps spiritual or mental, which distracts attention and disturbs the personal serenity and self-complacency of the worshippers of the world-power.

(3) **And the second angel . . .**—Better, *And the second* (*angel*) *poured out his vial on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man, and every soul of life died* (*even*) *the things that were in the sea.* The reference to the first of the Egyptian plagues is clear (Ex. vii. 20; comp. chap. viii. 8, 9). It has been remarked that "the Egyptian plagues stood in a very close connection

and every living soul died in the sea. (4) And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. (5) And I heard the angel

Chap. xvi. 4—7. The third vial.

with the natural state and circumstances of Egypt. The Nile, which was their strength, became worse than useless when its waters were turned to blood." There is a similar feature here. The sea, out of which the wild beast rose, from which the world-power drew strength, is turned to blood, the blood as of a dead man, corrupt and loathsome. The sea represented the tumultuous impulses and passions of the masses; there is a certain healthy force in these, but under certain conditions, when devoted to selfishness and earthliness, they become corrupt and deadly. Ruled by God and by right, the voice of multitudes is melodious as the voice of the sea, and the free movement of peoples, like the ocean, a health-giving moral environment to nations; but swayed by impulse, or directed by worldliness, they become an element of corruption, killing every token of better life.

(4) **And the third angel . . .**— The third vial resembles the second in its effects. As it is poured out on the rivers and springs of waters, they become blood. It is not only the great sea which becomes blood, but all the merry streams and babbling brooks which carry their tribute of water seawards also turn corrupt. And this plague is acknowledged by heavenly voices as a just retribution (verses 5—7). The streams and rivers feed the sea; they are the powers and influences which go to the making up of the great popular sentiment: these are smitten by the same corruption. Men cannot worship worldliness or earthliness without degrading even those who contribute to their instruction, their recreations, and their joys to the same level. When the public taste grows corrupt, the literature will, for example, become so in a more or less degree; the up-flowing tide will colour the down-coming stream. "The morality of a nation's art," writes a modern critic, "always rises to the level of morality in a nation's manners. Morality takes care of itself, and always revenges any outrage which art may put upon its laws by either lowering the art that so offends, or extinguishing it." (Dallas, *Gay Science*, Vol. II., 16.) It is true in even a wider sense. The loftier powers of imagination, the range of poetical elevation, are cramped and killed in a base, world-worshipping age. The streams of life grow putrid, the fresh and bright gifts of God are polluted, when the ocean of public thought is unwholesome.

(5—7) But this state of things is declared to be a just retribution, and reasonably so; for the corruption arises because the true power of life has been rejected: it is the refusal of the good, the want of the life-giving element, which is the secret of all death, physical, moral, spiritual. "'Tis life we want when breath is scant." The

of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. (6) For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. (7) And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments. (8) And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with

Chap. xvi. 8, 9. The fourth vial.

---

world-power and its worshippers have driven away goodness and faith, the elements of the higher life of man; they have slain the just and the righteous, who were the salt of the earth; they have rejected Christ, who is the life of men; how can they reap anything but decay and death? They slay the righteous; the death of righteousness leaves them nothing but the lifeless blood behind; they can no longer drink moral life from the good; there is but the legacy of death. "Blood of saints and prophets did they pour out; and blood didst Thou give them to drink."

(5) **And I heard the angel of the waters . . .**—That is, the angel who was set over the waters, or the angel who is, on the heavenly side, representative of the waters. (See *Excursus A: On the Angels.*) The angel acknowledges God's righteousness. *Thou art righteous . . . because Thou didst judge these things*—*i.e.*, because of the righteous law which these judgments manifested.

(6) **For they have shed . . .**—Better, *Because they shed* (not, "have shed," but *did shed*, or *pour out*), *and blood didst Thou give them; they are worthy.* "For" is to be omitted; the sentence has a startling force without it. They—*i.e.*, those enemies of all righteousness—are worthy; they receive the due reward of their deeds.

(7) **And I heard . . .**—Translate, *And I heard* (not "another out of the altar," but) *the altar saying, Even so, Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.* The altar beneath which the souls of the martyrs cried, and on which the prayers of saints were offered, is represented as confirming the testimony to the just dealings of God.

(8, 9) **And the fourth . . .**—Better, *And the fourth* (*angel*) *poured out his vial upon the sun; and it was given to it* (the "sun," not the "angel;" the rendering of the English version "unto him" is misleading) *to scorch men with fire. And men* (*i.e.*, those who were worshippers of the wild beast) *were scorched . . . and did not repent to give Him glory.* The sun, the great source of light and warmth, whose beams call forth the flowers of the earth, becomes a power to blast, not to bless. This is another example of the way in which the things full of beneficence are turned into powers of sorrow

fire. (9) And men were scorched[1] with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. (10) And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of

[1] Or, *burned.*

Chap. xvi. 10, 11. The fifth vial.

to those who follow evil: Not only the pleasant gifts and influences, which, like streams, were made to gladden men, grow corrupt, but the very source of light and knowledge becomes a power to destroy. We may contrast this influence of the sun with the beneficent beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Christ rose as the light and sun upon the world, because He diffused the knowledge which gave life to men; but here we have a light and sun which scorches. There is a knowledge which withers while it illumines; there is a teaching which does not warm the heart, but dries both heart and conscience, and brings but pain. The result, painful as it is, does not work repentance. Suffering, without grace and humility, does not bless men; they grow angry; the fire hardens instead of purifying. The whole series of these judgments illustrates the awful truth that there is a stage in personal life, and in national and world life also, in which suffering loses its remedial force, because the character has become set, and even an occasional desire after higher things is no longer felt.

> "When we in our viciousness
> Grow hard, the wise gods seal our eyes,
> In our own slime drop our clear judgments,
> Make us adore our errors, and thus
> We strut to our destruction."

(10) **And the fifth . . .**—Better, *The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne* (not "the seat:" see Notes on chaps. iv. 10 and xiii. 2) *of the wild beast.* The vials of judgment gradually dissolve the integrity and organisation of the kingdom of the wild beast. The result of the principles on which it has been based begin to show themselves: first, moral disease in individuals; then a corrupt tone of national morals spreading into the higher orders of society: then the fierce pride of vaunted light which scorches. Where these are, disorganisation is not far off; evil goes out a murderer and comes home a suicide. The retribution comes home; the throne of the world-power, the very head and centre of its authority, is smitten.

And his kingdom was full of darkness.—*And his kingdom was darkened.* We have the counterpart of the Egyptian plague (Ex. x. 21—23); there was a typical force in that ancient plague: the kingdom which boasted itself so full of light becomes darkened. When men shut out the higher light, the smoke of their own candles will soon obscure the whole heaven. When moral evil is linked with intellectual light, the moral evil will be found the stronger; for we cannot have a sunbeam without the sun. "Take heed," said Christ, "that the light that is in

darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, [11] and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. [12] And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water

Chap. xvi. 12—16. The sixth vial.

thee be not darkness." There is a light that is darkness; the progress of evil bringing about its own retribution proves this conclusively.

[10, 11] But even the failure of their own light does not work repentance: *they gnawed their tongues from their pain.* Here is remorse and suffering. They are "unto themselves" (as the Book of Wisdom describes the Egyptians) "more grievous than the darkness" (Wisd. xvii. 21); but there is no softening or humbling of themselves, no turning to God. They still love what God hates, and hate what He loves, for they blasphemed God, &c., *and repented not of their works.* Such is the wretched state of the world-power in the day when retributive evil overtakes it—darkness, pain, and inability to repent. Is it not a picture of the ultimate state of all sin? It is not a vast world-power alone which exhibits pain and confusion like this. It is to be seen over and over again in men and nations. The power of evil comes home and robs men of their accustomed guides. They are brought into darkness and trouble; the throne where the master-power of worldliness sat is cast down; the evil passion which was the unifying power of their life is deprived of the field of its power; then follows exasperation, anger at defeat, readiness to accuse others, but no blame of self, no repentance.

[12] **And the sixth . . .**—Better, *The sixth (angel) poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried that the way of the kings who are from the rising of the sun might be prepared.* The symbolical meaning of the Euphrates has been touched upon before. (See Notes on chap. ix. 14.) In the great age-long struggle between the kingdoms of Christ and the world the Euphrates represents the great separating boundary between the two kingdoms, as the literal Euphrates formed the barrier between Israel and the hostile northern and eastern kingdoms. It is the great impediment to war. It is true that there is a great interposed boundary of public opinion, which restrains evil from breaking forth in its ruder and more violent forms. Men may be hostile to spiritual religion, yet they scarcely like to shock public sentiment, or to incur the charge of depraving public morals; but there may come a time, after false principles have been taught, corrupt manners tolerated, and the light of better things darkened, when the public sentiment loses all sense of shame, and the decorums of life, which have acted as a breakwater against the tide of outrageous evil, are swept away; then is the Euphrates dried, and then may the hostile powers of evil, unrestrained by any considerations, unchecked by the popular conscience, cross boldly over and

thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. (13) And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. (14) For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles,

invade the whole sacred soil of human life. There have been times like this when shameless sin has walked forth secure of public favour, to desecrate every sanctuary of purity and faith—when the most barbarous manners and the most unscrupulous violations of public faith and morals have been not only tolerated, but applauded. The "kings of the east" (or *of the sunrising*) represent the forces of rude and open evil which have been long restrained. As the four barbarian and tyrant kings (Gen. xiv. 1—24) from the East invaded the land of promise in Abraham's days, so the leaders of open and violent hate of right, purity, and Christ, have the way of their advance prepared. But certain agencies go forth to bring about this uprising of rude revolt against every sanctity of life.

(13, 14) **And I saw . . .**—Better, *And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the wild beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs. For they are spirits of demons, doing signs, which go forth upon the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty.* Some have thought that the kings of the East are the representatives of the Christian powers, and that the drying up of the Euphrates is the preparation for their entrance into the land of promise. The general drift of the chapter seems to me to be adverse to this view. The two hostile kingdoms are being brought slowly into open antagonism; the great issues are to be brought to a decisive test; the time comes when a decision must be made: "If God be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him." The situation becomes so strained that it is useless to keep up the appearance of a respectable neutrality, for forces have been at work which are gradually bringing all powers into the conflict. The forces which are at work preparing for this issue are evil forces; "unclean spirits," little frogs, spirits of demons go forth to gather every world-power to the struggle. All this points to the final mobilisation of the hosts of evil for an attack upon the kingdom of Christ. Every impediment is removed, and the Euphrates is dried. The kings may advance: like the hosts of Pharaoh they may enter the dried-up sea in hot haste of their hatred of all righteousness. Evil is reckless now, and moves to its destruction; but it cannot so move without working upon men. Three evil spirits go forth for this purpose. There are three radical foes of Christ and His righteousness: the dragon, representing the hate of evil spirits; the wild beast, representing the hostility of world-power; the false prophet, representing the antagonism of world-cul-

which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (15) Behold, I come as a [a] thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. (16) And he gathered them together into a place

[a] Matt. 24. 43.

ture and intellectualism — these three send forth each their emissary appealing to the pride and passions of men. What are we to understand by them? We must consider their origin. The world-power would have us worship the things seen. It sends forth the spirit of earthliness, the spirit which works in the voluptuary, the ambitious, and the avaricious, the spirit which makes earthly things its end (Phil. iii. 19). The world-culture sends forth its spirit of intellectualism, which denies the spiritual nature of man, and substitutes taste and culture for spirituality. The dragon sends forth the spirit of egotism, of proud, self-sufficient independence, which culminates in an utter hatred of the Creator. The three spirits combined make up that wisdom which St. James described as earthly, sensual (unspiritual, psychical), devilish (Jas. iii. 15). We may compare the three foes in the "Red Cross Knight:" Sansloy (without law), Sansfoy (without faith), and Sansjoy (without joy) —Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. They are like frogs: here is a reference again to the Egyptian plagues.

These spirits gather all earthly powers to the war (not "battle.") of the great day of God the Almighty. The day which will test the power of combined evil, the day which, beginning in rash pride, will end in bitter defeat, to this the evil spirits lure their followers, as the false prophets lured Ahab to his overthrow at Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kings xxii. 20): such is one of the final aspects of evil. The voice of inclination is listened to as though it were prophetic. The suggestions of sinful desire are not only obeyed, but reverenced as oracles. The wicked hath an oracle of transgression in his heart (Ps. xxxvi. 1 *et seq.*).

(15) **Behold, I come . . .**— Translate, *Behold, I come as a thief.* It is the oft-repeated Scripture warning (chap. iii. 3; 1 Thess. v. 2, 3; 2 Pet. iii. 10. Comp. Luke xii. 35—40). It reminds us not only that our Lord may come unexpectedly, but that He may even come and we be unaware. There is one day when He will come, and every eye will behold Him; but He comes in various ways and forms to bless and to test man. Blessed are they who are ready, watching. But vigilance is not enough: the garments must be kept. The powers of evil are abroad. Sloth and pleasure may counsel ease, and tempt the watcher to lay aside his garments and take rest and sleep. The earnest watcher desires, like St. Paul, to be found in Christ, clad in the true righteousness of faith (Phil. iii. 9).

(16) **And he gathered . . .**— Better, *He gathered them together to the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.* Armageddon is the

called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (17) And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. (18) And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great. (19) And the great city was

Chap. xvi. 17–21. The seventh vial.

mountain of Megiddo. It is the high table-land surrounded by hills which was the great battle-field of the Holy Land. There the fortunes of dynasties and kingdoms have been decided; there the cause of liberty has triumphed; there kings fought and fell; there Gideon and Barak were victorious; there Ahaziah and Josiah were slain. The old battle-ground becomes the symbol of the decisive struggle. It is raised in meaning: it is a type, not a locality. The war of principles, the war of morals, the war of fashion culminates in an Armageddon. The progress of the spiritual struggle in individual men must lead in the same way to a mountain of decision, where the long-wavering heart must take sides, and the set of the character be determined. "There is no waving of banners and no prancing of horses' hoofs; the warfare is spiritual, so that there is in sight neither camp nor foe." It is that conflict which emerges out of various opinions and diverse principles: "the religious tendencies of the times" are (as we have been reminded) powers marshalling themselves for the battle of Armageddon. We must not look for great and startling signs: the kingdom and the conflict of the kingdom is within and around us (Luke xvii. 20, 21).

(17) **And the seventh . . .**—Translate, *And the seventh* (*angel*) *poured out his vial upon the air, and there came forth a voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done.* The results of the outpouring of this vial are described in the following verses; but before these are seen, the voice from the throne—God's own voice (see verse 1)—proclaims, as though rejoicing in the near approach of the happy end, "It is done." The termination of these scenes of sin and suffering is now close at hand, for the last of the last plagues has been sent forth.

(18) **And there were voices . . .**—There is some variety in the order of the words in different MSS. *There were lightnings, and voices, and thunders* (comp. chaps. viii. 5 and xi. 19); *there was a great earthquake, such as was not from the time there was a man upon the earth.* The earthquake, which is the shaking down of the kingdom of evil (comp. Heb. xii. 26—29), completes the overthrow of which the earlier judgments have been precursors. The throne of the wild beast has been visited, the centre of his power smitten; now the metropolis of his empire is

divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.[a] [20] And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. [21] And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

[a] Jer. 25. 15.

about to fall. *And the great city* (*i.e.*, Babylon, the symbol of the world-power's capital) *became into three parts.* It lost its power of cohesion. The three evil spirits endeavoured to unite all powers in one grand assault, but there is no natural cohesion among those whose only bond is hatred of good. The first convulsion shakes them to pieces, and the cities of the nations fall. Every subordinate power in which the earthly element was mingled (comp. Dan. ii. 41—44) is overthrown in the earthquake, even as every tree which the "Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13); and great Babylon was remembered before God, &c. The features of the overthrow of Babylon are described more fully later on (chaps. xvii., xviii.), where the various aspects of evil in the great metropolis of the world-power are dealt with (chaps. xvii. 1—7, and xviii. 1—3). The fall of Pagan Rome is but one illustration of the overthrow of Babylon.

[20] **And every island fled.**—So wide-spread are the effects of the earthquake; the convulsion tests every spot; there is only one kingdom which cannot be shaken. (Comp. Dan. ii. 44; vi. 26; Heb. x. 28.)

[21] **And there fell . . .**—*And a great hail, as of a talent in weight, descends from the heaven on men.* There is again a reference to the Egyptian plagues. But we may also call to mind the great defeat of the enemies of Israel at Bethoron (Josh. x. 1—11), when "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven." Such an overthrow awaits every confederacy that sets itself in array against the kingdom of the righteous King. The discomfiture and the plague works no repentance; the men blaspheme God because of the hail, *for great is its plague exceedingly.* The proud, hard spirit which still hates the good remains: thus is sin its own worst penalty. As an illustration of this hard, unsubdued spirit, we may call to mind Capaneus, in Dante's *Inferno*, and the words in which Virgil addresses him:—

"Thou art more punished, in that this thy pride
Lives yet unquenched; no torment save thy rage
Were to thy fury pain proportioned full."

The unrepentant state of those upon whom the vials are poured is to be contrasted with the different result of the earthquake in chap. xi. 13, when men gave glory to the God of heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.— [1] And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: [2] with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have

Chap. xvii. 1—6. The vision of the scarlet-clad woman, Babylon.

A.D. 96.

XVII.

This chapter and the following give the more minute account of great Babylon. We have had mention of her before in general terms (chaps. xiv. 8; xvi. 9) as the metropolis of the wild beast's empire, the great city hostile to Jerusalem, the city of the saints. The Evangelist is now told more particularly her character, crimes, power, and position. She is seen clothed in splendour, intoxicated with her own power and cruelty, supported by the wild beast, and hostile to the cause of the righteous King; but doomed to fall, amidst the wonder of the world and the rejoicing of the saints (chap. xviii. 17—21).

[1] **And there came . . .**— One of the vial-bearing angels summons the seer, saying, *Hither I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters* (or, *the many waters*—comp. verse 15). *The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and they who inhabit the earth were made drunken* (lost their reason and self-control) *from the wine, the delicious and delirious draught of her fornication.* Before we go farther it is well to make sure of our ground. Babylon was the great city, whose splendour dazzled, and whose power destroyed Jerusalem (Isa. xxxix. 1—8; xiii. 19; xiv. 4, 13, 14; xlvii. 5—8). Against Babylon the voices of the prophets were lifted up (Isa. xxi. 9; Jer. li. 25); she seemed to them the embodiment of splendid vice and resistless power; "the glory of kingdoms," "the golden city," "who exalted her throne above the stars of God," "who sat as a lady given to pleasures, and flattering herself that she would see no sorrow." In her greatness and her hostility to Jerusalem she became a type of later world-powers; and, in St. John's vision, Babylon, in her purple and her pomp, in her luxuriousness and her tyranny, takes her place. And it is explained in the vision that Babylon is no longer the literal Babylon, but the power which has taken her place of pride and empire. That power was Rome. Rome was in St. John's day just what Babylon had been in the days of the prophets—"the hammer of the whole earth," "the golden cup that made all the earth drunken" (Jer. l. 23; li. 7; comp. verse 2 of this chapter). At the same time, the way in which the Evangelist transfers to the Rome of his day the prophetic language which earlier prophets applied to ancient Babylon (compare these chapters, xvii.

been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. (3) So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads

and xviii., with Isa. xlvii., Jer. li. 6—14) ought to be sufficient to warn us against limited and local interpretations, even if the seven-headed wild beast did not show us that the world-power, like the moral principles of which Babylon and Rome were examples, is not confined to one age. If we remember this, we shall see that the Babylon of the Apocalypse, while, undoubtedly, Pagan Rome, cannot be limited to it. Is it, then, the question must be asked, Papal Rome? The answer is: In so far as Papal Rome has wielded tyrant power, turned persecutor, stood between the spirits of men and Christ, depraved men's consciences, withheld the truth, connived at viciousness, sought aggrandisement, and been a political engine rather than a witness for the righteous King, she has inherited the features of Babylon. The recognition of these features led Dante to apply this very passage in the Apocalypse to Rome under the rule of worldly and tyrant popes, when he exclaimed to the shade of Nicholas III. (*Il compiuto*) :—

"Of shepherds like to you the Evangelist
Was ware, when her who sits upon the waves
With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld:
She who with seven heads tower'd at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of glory drew
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight.
Of gold and silver ye have made your god,
Differing wherein from the idolator,
But that he worships one, a hundred ye!"

—*Inferno*, Cant. xix., 109—117.

(3) **So he carried . . .**—Better, *And he carried me away into a wilderness in spirit: and I saw a woman sitting upon a wild beast of scarlet colour, teeming with names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.* We recognise the wild beast as that described in chap. xiii. Now the wild beast carries the woman; for she draws her support from the great world-power. The scene is the wilderness. The contrast between the desolation around her and the splendour of her appearance is striking and suggestive. The woman clothed with the sun (chap. xii. 1), persecuted by the dragon, finds a home in the wilderness into which she is driven. She is persecuted, but not forsaken; she can joy in tribulation. The scarlet-clad woman, amid all her dazzling surroundings, is still in a wilderness. The runagates continue in scarceness. Sansjoy is the brother of Sansloy. The wild beast is scarlet in colour. The dragon was red (chap. xii. 3); the woman is clothed in scarlet. Is it the emblem of lawlessness ending in violence? (Comp. Isa. i. 18.) It has also a show of sovereignty.

Full of names.—*Teeming with names, &c.* The living creatures (chap. iv. 8) *teemed* (the same word as here) with eyes, the token of ready obedience and true intelli-

and ten horns. (4) And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked[1] with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: (5) and upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS[2] AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (6) And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:

[1] Or, *gilded.*
[2] Or, *fornications.*

gence. The wild beast teems with tokens of lawlessness and self-sufficiency.

(4) **And the woman was arrayed . . .**—Better, *arrayed* (or, *clad*) *in purple* (the colour of the robe which was in mockery put on our Lord—John xix. 2) *and scarlet gilded* (not "decked") *with gold*, &c. Her appearance is one of imperial splendour. (Comp. the description of Tyre in Ezekiel, chap. xxviii. 13.)

Having a golden cup in her hand . . .—Translate, *Having a golden cup in her hand teeming with abominations and with the unclean things of the fornication of the earth.* Jeremiah (chap. li. 7) called Babylon a "golden cup in the hand of the Lord." The cup had made all the earth drunken; the cup of intoxication, splendid and attractive, was full of an evil power, which robbed men's senses and degraded them. The great city of the world ever holds out such a glittering cup, which

> "Most do taste through fond intemperate desire.
> Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
> Th' express resemblance of the gods, is changed
> Into some brutish form. . . ."
> —*Comus*, 68—77.

(5) **And upon her forehead . . .**—It was usual with harlots to wear their name on the forehead; but the name here is more than a name. Like the name impressed upon the foreheads of the saints, it is "the expression of her nature"—

> "MYSTERY,
> BABYLON THE GREAT,
> THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND
> OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE
> EARTH."

The word "mystery" is, perhaps, part of the name; it is, at any rate, a prefix which tells us that the name is not literal, but symbolical. Something lies behind, which will be made manifest in due time. (Comp. 2 Thess. ii. 7.) She is mother of harlots. Others, in smaller spheres, will follow her example; but she is the origin and type of all.

(6) **And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.**—It is said later (chap. xviii. 24) that in her was found the blood of prophets, and saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth. The cruel spirit of persecution marked old Pagan Rome. She was drunk with their blood. It is not literally true that "all the blood shed on the

and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. (7) And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. (8) The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition:

Chap. xvii. 7–17. The vision explained.

earth" would be found in Rome, either Pagan or Papal; but it is spiritually true. Just as all the blood from righteous Abel to Zacharias was required of Jerusalem, so also of Babylon; for the spirit is the same spirit of hatred of holiness and love of worldliness. To slay one is to slay all, as to be guilty in one point of the Law is to be guilty of all; for it is not to mere acts, but also to the spirit and drift of men's conduct, that the Scriptures look. It is the Babylon spirit, whether dominant in Rome or in London, that kills the good. Wherever the spirit of worldliness (in its widest sense) is to be found, there is the spirit at enmity with God and good, and there is the Babylon which has slain the saints.

And when I saw her, I wondered . . .—Rather, *And I wondered when I saw her with great wonder* (not "admiration" in our modern sense). Why did St. John wonder? Was it at the splendour or the blasphemous names? Hardly these; for he was familiar with the former in descriptions of Babylon given by the prophets, and with the latter from his own vision in chap. xiii. The wonder probably rose from the strange alliance of the woman with the wild beast. It was not wonderful to see the vision of a wild beast or monster dealing out death and slaughter, but to see a woman allied with the monster and drunken with the blood of the holy provoked astonishment. The woman, too, was a harlot. The prophets had spoken of Israel and Judah as harlots, where they had allied themselves with the world and its dark idolatries (comp. Isa. i. 21; Jer. ii. 20; Ezek. xvi. 15; Hos. ii. 5). Did he read in the form of the vision the hint that in the lapse of years the Church of Christ, like Israel of old, might fall from her high calling and become the ally of the world-power? The hint of it slumbered in the vision.

(7) **And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?**—Better, *Wherefore didst thou wonder?* The angel explains the mystery or hidden meaning. In doing so he identifies the wild beast which carries the woman with the wild beast of chap. xiii. In that chapter the wild beast was seen wounded to death; the same thought is expressed in this chapter. *The wild beast was and is not.* It has received its death wound: the dying and risen Lord has given the death-blow to the world-power, as He has cast down Satan (chap. xii. 9), put limits to his power (chap. xx. 2), and destroyed him that had the power of death (Heb. ii. 14).

and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (9) And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. (10) And there are seven kings: five

In the victory of Christ the wild beast *that was* (*i.e.*, that had in successive ages been seen in the great world-powers) is slain, or, as the angel expresses it, *is not*. But though he is not, though he is to be reckoned as doomed, yet he will show signs of vitality: he will rise into temporary power. *He shall come up out of the abyss.* But the march of his power is only a march to the grave. He *goes to destruction.* Yet this transient revival and apparent recovery from its death-wound will be viewed (as was said in chap. xiii. 3: "all the world wondered after the wild beast") as a marvel by those whose spirits are not heaven-taught, and whose minds are set upon earthly things. *They that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, whose name is not written on the book of life from the foundation of the world, seeing the wild beast that he was, and is not, and shall be present* (*i.e.*, shall come again).

(9) **And here is the mind . . .** —Better, *Here* (omit "and") *is the mind*, &c. Attention is asked to the fuller explanation which follows. It needs true wisdom to behold many incidents of the world's history and not find stumbling-blocks in them (Pss. lxxiii. 2, 3, and cxix. 165). *The seven heads are seven mountains where the woman sitteth upon them.* The description seems to be drawn from Rome, the seven-hilled city. This keeps the reference to Rome before us, but at the same time the further explanation (in verse 10) widens our thoughts, and shows us that the literalism on which the imagery is based is used to convey a broader symbolical meaning. *The seven heads are seven mountains*, &c., *and they* (the seven heads; the words "There are seven kings" in the English version are confusing) *are seven kings:* the woman rides on the seven-headed beast; even so Rome dwells on her seven hills, and so also the world-city, seen in vision, sits among the various empires which have risen, like great mountains, in the history of the world.

(10) **And there are seven kings . . .**—Better, *They are seven kings: five* (not "are fallen," but) *fell, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he shall come, he must continue a short time.* It has been debated whether these kings are individual sovereigns, or forms of government, or kingdoms. The last view is the one adopted in this Commentary. The wild beast belongs to no one age, but is a power which has risen in every age; the seven heads represent the successive culminations of the world-power. Our space is insufficient to discuss here the whole question. But the language here

are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short

used and the passages in the earlier prophets, which may be called the parent passages of the present vision, favour the interpretation that great world-kingdoms are intended. The language favours this view. It is said that the "kings fell." The word is the one which has been used for political catastrophe: the cities of the nations fell (chap. xvi. 19); Babylon, it is cried, has fallen (chap. xiv. 8). It suits the overthrow of empires, and is so used in the LXX.; to apply it to individual kings is to ask that it shall be equivalent to "they died." It is to be noticed that the four beasts of Daniel (Dan. vii. 3—8) are declared to be four kings (verse 17), but these kings are not individual kings, but represent kingdoms. (See Dan. vii. 23.) This brings us to the drift of the parent passage. Daniel saw four wild beasts rise from the sea; they represented the then great world-power Babylon, and its three successors, Persia, Greece, and Rome. This is a guide to us here, as most commentators admit; but two great world-powers had preceded Babylon, viz., Egypt and Assyria: these figure in the ancient prophecies as forces hostile to the righteous King. St. John, whose visions took the range of the world's drama, could not see the representative of the ever rising spirit of worldly hostility to God's chosen without seeing Egypt and Assyria included. The voices of Moses and Isaiah called to him across the centuries that in these the world principle of their day found its clearest and strongest manifestation. In various empires the world-power showed itself: in Egypt, the house of bondage (Ex. xx. 2); in Assyria, that exalted herself against God (Isa. xxxvii. 23); in Babylon, the hammer of the whole earth (Jer. l. 23); in Persia, and in Greece; and in succession these kingdoms fell, only to be succeeded by another—Rome. Five fell; the one is. But what is the seventh, the other who is not yet come? We must recall the appearance of the wild beast. It had seven heads and ten horns. Where were these ten horns? It seems generally admitted that they were all on the seventh head. The seventh head, which represents the seventh kingdom, or manifestation of the world principle which is described as not yet come, then, was different in appearance from the others. It was ten-horned. It had not the same unity of appearance as the others. Now the ten horns are explained as ten kings or minor powers (verse 12). The conclusion, therefore, is that the seventh head must be rather an aggregation of monarchies than a single universal empire. This agrees with Daniel's prophecy, that out of the fourth kingdom, which corresponds, as we have seen, with the sixth head of the wild beast here, ten kings should arise (Dan. vii. 7, 23, 24).

The seventh kingdom (the ten-horned head) it is said, will, when it arises, continue a "short time." The short time is probably the same as the "one hour" in ver. 12, where the ten kingdoms, represented by the ten horns, receive

space. (11) And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. (12) And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. (13) These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. (14) These shall make war with the Lamb, and

power one hour with the wild beast.

(11) **And the beast . . .** — Better, *And the wild beast which was, and is not, even he himself is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into destruction.* The wild beast himself, forming as it were an eighth, has to be reckoned with. There are seven heads; when these fall no eighth head will rise, but the wild beast, whose vitality has been seen in these successive heads, forms, as it were, an eighth, which is "out of the seven" — not one of them, but one rising out of them; no eighth empire shall rise, but the wild beast, now smitten in all the seven heads of his power, will, in the convulsive death-throe, seem an eighth power, in which the ebbing life of all the seven finds expression. The wild beast linked itself with seven great empires in succession: these all fell; the wild beast is left, as an eighth: then "the wild beast goes into destruction." As an illustration, we may recall her whom the seven brothers had as wife; last of all the woman, the eighth, which was of the seven, died also. It has been noticed that the wild beast does not "fall," like the others, "but goes into destruction;" there are no more world-powers like those who have fallen, but the wild beast is left, a last power reserved for destruction, a final antichrist, the lawless one whom the Lord will destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. ii. 3). This fierce and last flickering up of the doomed power of evil is dwelt on again in chap. xx. 7—10.

(12) **And the ten horns . . .** —The explanation of the ten horns. They are the kings, not necessarily, as we have seen, personal kings, but rather kingdoms or nationalities, who received not a kingdom as yet; as they are on the seventh head, the hour of their power is not yet, but comes at the fall of the sixth head: then they receive power one hour. (Comp. "short time" in verse 10.) But though these are sundered powers, they are one in their subjection to the wild beast. They have one mind or judgment, and their power and authority they give to the wild beast. The universal empire idea may disappear, but the spirit and principle of mere earthliness will remain; it needs no vast power like Rome to illustrate its spirit. The ten horns are united in one mind; they move as the wild beast directs; their work and tendency of their power is hostile to Christ. They shall make war with the Lamb; and

the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful. [15]And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. [16]And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and

[14] 1 Tim. 6. 15.

---

the Lamb shall conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings. When do these powers make war with the Lamb? The answer is, they make war when the direction of their policy and morals is in favour of oppression, wrong, worldliness; whenever nations or peoples allow the secular spirit to breathe through all they do, they are not with Christ, they are against Him. There are hints that some "special outbreak" of hostility may take place on the eve of the full manifestation of the righteous King and His kingdom (chap. xix. 16—19); busy evil spirits, lawless utterances, unbrotherly federations, unspiritual conceptions, may pave the way for such; the great crisis will then come, when the issue will be secularity and spirituality. It is not necessary to define the ten kings; the number does not need to be pressed as literal; for in Hebrew, "when a whole was to be divided into parts, ten was the number commonly adopted" (Bähr, quoted by Dr. Currey). The war of the ten kings against the Lamb is brought out more fully in chap. xix. There the King of kings is seen victorious; in His victory they who are with Him, the *called, and chosen, and faithful,* shall share. This threefold description is a brief summary of the Christian life. This is the only place where St. John employs the word translated "called." (Comp. Matt. xx. 16.)

[15] **And he saith unto me . . .**—Better, *And he* (*i.e.*, the angel mentioned in ver. 1) *saith*, &c. The waters on which the harlot sits are explained as "multitudes." We have thus a key to the imagery employed here and elsewhere (chap. xiii. 1). The wild beast and the harlot both draw much of their power from the people. The easily-moved passions of the fickle crowd, its generous, unreasoning impulses, are used by subtle and seductive enemies. "Men never so much need to be theocratic as when they are most democratic," said De Tocqueville. They need to recognise God as their King, then, most when their new discovered strength is likely to be made the tool of unscrupulous ambition.

[16] **And the ten horns . . .**—Translate, *And the ten horns which thou sawest* (not, as in English version, "on the beast," but), *and the wild beast, these shall hate the harlot.* The harlot was seen in splendid apparel riding on the wild beast; now the wild beast, in the day of the seventh head, turns with the ten horns of his power upon her,

shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. (17) For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. (18) And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER XVIII.—

(1) And after these things Chap. xviii. 1—24. The fall of Babylon.

makes her deserted, strips her of her adornments, consumes the spoil—for this is what is meant by "eating her flesh"—and burns her with fire. The woman in the days of the Evangelist was Rome (verse 18), but great and resistless as her power seemed, it was doomed; the day would come when other kingdoms would rise who would hate her for her tyranny, envy her splendour, and covet her wealth. Then the great Babylon would fall, like Jezebel of old; the painted cheek, the pencilled eyebrow, and the amorous glance have lost their fascination; those who have pandered to her vices would turn against her, and cast her out to be trampled under foot. So did the Babylon of St. John's day fall—perishing in the blood that she had spilt, or left "childless and crownless in her voiceless woe."

(17) **For God hath put . . .**—Better, *For God gave it into their hearts to do His mind, and (to do) one mind, and to give their kingdom, &c.* The kings give their kingdom to the wild beast; their authority and might is used for him, whether in making war upon the Lamb (verse 14) or in casting down the harlot. In these enterprises they act unitedly; there is given to them to make "one mind." But they are only carrying out the righteous will of God; God wills that the harlot shall fall; and even in their war upon the Lamb, they are but preparing for the crisis when the foes of the righteous King shall fall (chap. xix. 19). Thus does the wrath of man ever turn to God's praise.

(18) **And the woman which thou sawest . . .**—Read, *And the woman whom thou sawest is* (not "that," but) *the great city, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth.* With these words the angel's explanation of "the mystery of the woman" (see verse 7) ends. The harlot is a city; the Babylon of the past lives again in Rome; the woman is Rome, the goddess of lands and peoples."

"She who was named Eternal, and arrayed
Her warriors but to conquer—she who veiled
Earth with her haughty shadow and displayed
Until the o'ercanopied horizon failed
Her rushing wings—Oh! she who was Almighty hailed."

XVIII.

The Fall of Babylon.—In the commencement of the last chapter the angel (one of the vial-bearing angels) had promised to show the seer the judgment of the harlot (verse 1); he was accordingly

I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. (2) And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon[a] the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become

[a] ch. 14. 8.

Chap. xviii. 2, 3. Her demoralisation.

shown first the vision of the scarlet-clad woman seated on the wild beast. The seer was filled with wonder, and the angel entered into explanation of the mystery of the woman, touching on her relation to the beast, and her ultimate doom, and revealing to him who she was. But though the angel has proclaimed her overthrow in his explanatory statement, the judgment of the harlot has not been seen in the vision; we must, in fact, regard the portion of the last chapter, from verse 7 to the end, as a kind of parenthesis, a pause in the drama of vision, the action of which is resumed in chap. xviii. Yet though the dramatic action is taken up, we are not shown in vision her actual overthrow; but we gather it from the four agencies which are put forward—the angel which proclaims her moral fall (verses 1—3); the voice from the heaven which gives the vivid description of her sudden overthrow, and of the marvellous sensation it occasioned (verses 4—20); the angel which tells the irremediable character of her overthrow (verses 21—24); and finally, the chorus of the heavenly multitude rejoicing over her fall (chap. xix. 1—4).

(1) **And after these things . . .**—Or, better, *After these things* (omit "and") *I saw another angel coming down, having great power* (or, *authority*—entrusted to him for the work against Babylon); *and the earth was illumined by* (literally, *out of*) *his glory*. The light which shines from the heavenly messenger shines like day upon the tawdry splendour of Babylon, and shows that what was admired was but worthless and corrupt. In his brief, but rousing call, he proclaims it to be so.

(2) **And he cried . . .**—We must omit "mightily," and render, *And he cried in a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become an habitation of demons, and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hated bird.* Those who walk in darkness, and whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded through their lusts, look only on the material side, upon prosperous times, large revenues, rapidly developing resources. The great city of the world looks fair and glorious in their eyes, and even the godly are dazzled by her beauty; but when the light of heaven shines, her fall is seen to be inevitable, for she is seen to be hateful; her palaces are seen to be prisons, her highest wisdom little more than low cunning, her most exalted intelligence base-born, her sweetest songs discordant cries; the evil spirit, welcomed back, has come in seven-fold power; for the dry places afford no rest to those who still love sin and the pleasures of sin. The description in this verse is drawn largely from Isa. xiii. 21, 22 it is a picture of desolation and

the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. (3) For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance [1] of her delicacies. (4) And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. (5) For

[1] Or, *power.*

Chap. xviii. 4—20. The dirge of doom.

degradation, but it has its moral counterpart.

(3) **For all nations have drunk . . .**—Better, *Because by the wrath of her fornication* (comp. chap. xiv. 8, and Note there) *all the nations have drunk* (or, according to another reading, *have fallen;* the readings are akin: the drinking of it leads to their degradation and fall), *and the kings of the earth committed* (not "have committed") *fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich out of the strength of her luxury.* She has been an enemy to mankind viewed in three great aspects: nations, kings, and merchants. She has brought delirium upon nations; she has reduced kings; she has bribed merchants: her sins are strong sins; with both hands earnestly has she sinned.

(4—20) The voice out of heaven warns the faithful to leave her, and describes her fall.

(4) **Voice from heaven . . .**—Read, *Voice out of heaven, saying, Come forth out of her, my people, that ye partake not in her sins, and that of her plagues ye receive not.* The voice is not said to be that of another angel. It is not necessary to say whose voice it is; that it is a voice of divine love giving warning is enough. The coming forth is not to be understood of a bodily exodus from Rome. It is rather the warning which is so needful in every corrupt state of society, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; to practise that separation from the spirit of the world which is essential lest we should be entangled in the meshes of its sinful habits. This duty of separation may sometimes lead to a literal exodus, and even under the pressure of overwhelming necessity to secession from a world-corrupted church; but the jeopardy lies in attachment to the world-spirit (1 John ii. 15). The parallel warnings in Jer. li. 6, 45, and Zech. ii. 6, 7, should be read; but the story of Lot in Sodom best illustrates the spirit of the passage (Gen. xix.), for it is participation in sin which is to be primarily guarded against.

(5) **For her sins have reached . . .**—Better, *For her sins have reached as far as heaven.*

her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. (6) Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. (7) How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow,[a] and shall see no sorrow. (8) Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall

[a] Isa. 47. 8.

The idea is of a great heap firmly fastened, and towering, like another Babel, as far as heaven. (Comp. 2 Chron. xxviii. 9, and Ezra ix. 6.) The idea is more than that of the cry of sin reaching heaven, as in the case of Sodom (Gen. xviii. 20, 21); the sins themselves, many and imperial, have touched the face of heaven. God hath remembered her. (Comp. chap. xvi. 19.) Sometimes the oppressed have thought that God had forgotten the voice of the enemy (Ps. lxxiv. 10—23); but the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation (2 Pet. iii. 8—15).

(6) **Reward her even as she rewarded . . .**—The same voice which bids the people of God come forth, summons the agents of vengeance. Chap. xvii. 16 tells whence these may arise. Read, *Give back to her, as she herself also gave back* (the word "you" should be omitted; it is not the saints, or those who have suffered from her, that are called to repay her), *and double* (the) *double according to her works; in the cup in which she mingled, mingle for her double.* Many Old Testament parallels will suggest themselves (Jer.. li. 18; Ps. lxxix. 12; cxxxvii. 8; and Isa. xl. 2). The "double" must not be taken to mean double her sins; her sins are themselves called double, and her judgment is according to her sins. She is double-stained in wickedness, and "the law of retribution fiercely works" in her. The cup of her luxuriousness becomes the cup of vengeance. (Comp. chap. xiv. 8; xvii. 4; and verse 3.) The flowery path "has led to the broad gate and the great fire."

(7) The thought of retribution is carried on in this verse. It should not read, "How much . . .," but, *In as many things as she glorified herself and luxuriated, so much give to her torment and grief; because in her heart she saith* (Comp. Ps. xlix. 11; Luke xiv. 30), *I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and shall never see sorrow.* The words are echoes of prophecies against old Babylon (Isa. xlvii. 7—9) and Tyre (Ezek. xxviii? 2).

(8) **Therefore shall her plagues come . . .**—Read, *For this cause in one day shall come her plagues, death and mourning . . .* and with *fire shall she be burnt, for strong is the Lord God who judged her.* God, the mighty God, has passed sentence. She thought herself strong; she forgot the strength of the Almighty. Her plagues are

be utterly burned with fire: for strong *is* the Lord God who judgeth her. [9] And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, [10] standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. [11] And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their

four-fold, as though from every quarter her trouble came: "death, for her scorn of the prospect of widowhood; mourning, for her inordinate revelling; famine, for her abundance;" and fire, the punishment of her fornication (Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9). (Comp. the series of contrasts in Isa. iii. 24—26.)

THE LAMENT OF THE KINGS (verses 9, 10).—(Their words of lament are given in verse 10.)

[9] **And the kings of the earth . . .**—Read, *And there shall weep and mourn over her the kings of the earth, who with her committed fornication and luxuriated, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off because of the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the strong city; because in one hour is come thy judgment.* Kings, merchants (verses 11—17), shippers (verses 17—19) join in lamenting the overthrow of the great city; all stand afar off, as though fearing to be involved in her ruin; all cry "Woe" (or, *Alas!*) at the beginning of their lament; and at the close the words "in one hour," telling the suddenness of the great city's overthrow, recur (verses 10, 17, 19) with the monotony of a passing bell heard at intervals amid the strains of sad music. The parallel passages in Ezek. xxvi. 15, 16; xxvii. 35, should be compared. The grief described is the result of fear mingled with selfishness; the mourners remember with a regret, only tempered with terror, the voluptuous life, the quick-growing profits, and the varied commercial advantages which they have lost in her overthrow.

THE LAMENT OF THE MERCHANTS (verses 11 — 17). — The lament proper, that is, the actual words put in the mouths of the merchants, is contained in verses 16, 17. The immediately preceding verses describe the various kinds of merchandise which were dealt in.

[11–13] **And the merchants of the earth . . .**— Better, *The merchants of the earth weep and mourn* (not "shall weep;" the vividness of the description is intensified by the use of the present tense) *over her; because their cargo no one buyeth any longer*—the cargo of gold, &c. The list of the cargoes and merchandise is not without arrangement. The various goods are placed in groups. The

merchandise any more: [12] the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine[1] wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, [13] and cinnamon,[a] and odours, and ointments, and frankin-

[12] the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine[1] wood,

[a] Ex. 30. 23; Prov. 7. 17; Cant. 4. 14.

[1] Or, *sweet.*

---

treasures come first—gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. The *soft goods* used for raiment are placed next—fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet; in the description of Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen (*Byssus*, the same word as here), we have a suggestive resemblance. Materials used in giving splendour to the furnishing of houses come next. Thyine wood, and every article (vessel, as in the English version, is hardly wide enough in meaning) of ivory, costly wood, brass, iron, and marble. The thyine wood was derived probably from a kind of citron-tree of African growth; the wood was sweet-scented, and was a favourite wood for doors, panels, and ceilings; its rich brown hue was often relieved by inlaid ivory. To articles used in furniture aromatics succeed. Cinnamon, amomum (this is omitted in the English version, but authority is in favour of its insertion), odours, ointments, and frankincense. Cinnamon, on its use, comp. Ex. xxx. 2, 3; it was one of the perfumes employed to enhance the delight of the voluptuary (Prov. vii. 17). It is doubtful whether it is the same as our modern cinnamon. Amomum, a kind of sweet-scented shrub, yielding an ointment much used for the hair. Odours, employed in incense. Next come articles of food—wine, oil, fine meal, wheat, cattle, and sheep. Then come the equipages—horses and chariots. The chariot (*rheda*) was a vehicle much used in Rome by the wealthy classes. Lastly, the traffic in human beings closes the list. Slaves (literally, *bodies*), and souls of men. There is perhaps an allusion specially to those slaves who were attached to the chariots or litters used by the rich. The traffic in slaves ("persons of men") is mentioned as part of the commerce of Tyre (Ezek. xxvii. 13). The number of slaves in Rome was enormous. "Souls of men." The climax of wicked worldliness is reached in this last; it gives the finishing touch to the picture of society wholly engrossed in pleasure and indolence and selfishness, which lays every market under tribute to add to its luxuriousness, and sacrifices not only the happiness, but the lives and liberties of their fellow-creatures, to their own enjoyment. It has been said that the general description here does not suit Rome, as Rome never was, and never could be, a commercial centre; but the picture is designed to show the corrupt luxury and voluptuousness of society in great Babylon, not necessarily the accumulated merchandise of a great commercial city. The various wares are "for her use and consumption," not for her to sell. All

cense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves,[1] and souls of men. (14) And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

[1] Or *bodies*.

the avenues from every distant spot of the earth found their focus in Rome; her existence, her political supremacy, and her luxuriousness of living, created and sustained all the commercial activity here described; with her fall, the hope of their gains passed from the merchants of the earth. Compare the language of Gibbon:—"The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forests of Scythia afforded some valuable furs; amber was brought from the shores of the Baltic and the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received for so useless a commodity. There was a considerable demand for Babylonian carpets and other manufactures of the East; but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. Every year, about the time of the summer solstice, a fleet of an hundred and twenty vessels sailed from Myos-hormos, a port of Egypt on the Red Sea. The coast of Malabar or the Island of Ceylon was the usual term of their navigation, and it was in those markets that the merchants from the more remote countries of Asia expected their arrival. The return of the fleet was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported on the backs of camels, from the Red Sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured without delay into the capital of the Empire. The objects of Oriental traffic were splendid and trifling: silk, a pound of which was esteemed in value not inferior to a pound of gold; precious stones also, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond, and a variety of aromatics that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labour and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profits; but the profits were made upon Roman subjects and a few individuals were enriched at the expense of the public" (Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. i., chap. ii.).

(14) Directly addressed to Babylon herself.

And the fruits that thy soul . . .—Rather, *And the fruits* (or, *the harvest*) *of the desire of thy soul* (that, namely, which thy soul lusteth after) *departed* (not "are departed:" the word expresses the thought that these things "departed once for all") *from thee, and all things that are rich and that are glorious perish from thee, and thou shalt not find them any more.* The descriptive passage is interrupted by this verse, in which Babylon herself is addressed. It is in harmony with the fervour of the whole chapter that the descriptive tone should for a moment give place to this apostrophe. The

(15) The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing. (16) And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! (17) For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, (18) and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city is* like unto this great city! (19) And they cast dust on their heads, and cried,

---

fruits to which the eye of desire had looked so longingly as to a harvest of delight departed. The desire of the wicked has perished.

(15–17) **The merchants of these things . . .**—The description is resumed. The merchants stand like the kings (see verse 10) afar off, because of the fear of her torment, saying, "Woe! woe! (or, alas! alas!) the great city, because in one hour so great wealth was desolated." The words of this lamentation are parallel to the lament of the kings, the only difference is characteristic—they bewail the sudden decay of the *wealth*. On the fine linen and purple, comp. verse 12, and Luke xvi. 19.

THE LAMENT OF THE SHIPMASTERS (verses 17—19).—On the whole passage read Ezek. xxvii. 32, &c.

(17, 18) **And every shipmaster . . .**—Or, better, *And every shipmaster, and every one who sails for a place, and sailors, and all who work the sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, Who is like the great city?* With this expression compare the similar one applied to the beast (chap. xiii. 4). It is the outcry of those who call to mind, with pain, a glory that was great, but now is gone. It is not to be taken as meaning "what city has suffered as she has?" but rather is it the recollection of her former splendour—"how great she was." This lingering of the mind over delights now vanished is one subtle element of misery. So the hapless Francesca thought—

> "There is no greater woe
> Than to remember days of happiness
> Amid affliction."—*Inf.* v. 121—3.

(19) **And they cast dust. .**—Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 30. The casting of dust or earth on the head is a token of sorrow and humiliation; it bears relation to the sitting in the dust. The one upon whom the sorrow had fallen sat in the dust or ashes. The attitude expressed that he had been brought very low, even to the ground. The mourning friends who came round him cast dust on their heads to express that they shared his sorrow. Thus it is related of Job:

weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. [20] Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God

Job sat in the ashes (Job ii. 8); the friends who came to comfort him sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven (verse 12). So in this place Babylon has been brought low (comp. Isa. xlvii. 1); the mourners, whose gains sink with her fall, throw dust upon their heads.

[19] **Alas! alas! that great city . . .**—The lament is parallel with the laments of the kings and the merchants; the difference is the appropriate reference to the destruction of the shipping interests. *Woe! Woe!* (or, *Alas! alas!*) *the great city, in which all who had their vessels on the sea grew rich out of her costliness.* By her "costliness" we are to understand her extravagances of living, and the splendour of her palaces, which drew materials from all ports of the world. The lament ends with the repeated cry "in one hour." *Because in one hour she was desolated.*

The Call to the Holy to Rejoice.

[20] **Rejoice over her . . .**—Better, *Rejoice over her, O heaven, and the saints, and the apostles, and the prophets, because God has judged your judgment on* (or, *out of*) *her.* The second portion of the chapter closes with this invitation to the saints to rejoice: they are summoned to rejoice because the law of retribution has worked on her. Your judgment (it is said to the saints) is judged on her. This does not mean a judgment which the saints have decreed, but the judgment which Babylon wrought on the holy is now exacted from her (comp. verse 6, and chaps. vi. 10, and xiii. 10). Heaven, and every class of those whose citizenship has been in heaven, are bidden by the heavenly voice to rejoice. The covetous and the worldly mourn; their minds were set upon a material glory, which has slipped away from their grasp. All saintly souls, whose affections have been towards righteousness and the righteous King, can rejoice; for the wealth of holiness is imperishable, and the fall of Babylon is the removal of one vast hindrance to holiness. It has been argued that the verse represents the Apostles to be in heaven, and from this it has been inferred that the twelve must have all died before the Apocalypse was written, and if so, St. John was not the writer. The verse, however, has no reference whatever to the question: it is not meant to state who have passed into heaven and who have not: it is simply a summons to all who have fought on the side of their Lord to rejoice at the removal of one of the great obstacles to the manifestation of Christ's kingdom. Thus do all holy men, whether on earth or heaven, joy when any giant evil is swept away.

hath avenged you on her.
(21) And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.
(22) And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
(23) and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee;

Chap. xviii. 21—24. Her fall is final.

THE IRREMEDIABLE OVERTHROW OF BABYLON SYMBOLICALLY DECLARED.

(21) **And a mighty angel . . .**—The taking up of the stone and casting it into the waters is a symbol drawn from Jeremiah (chap. li.). Jeremiah enjoined Seraiah to bind the prophetic roll to a great stone, and cast them together into the Euphrates. The meaning of the act was explained—"Thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise," &c. (Jer. li. 63, 64). The great dead mass, sinking helplessly by the law of its own weight, signified a fall past recovery. So Pharaoh and his host sank like lead in the mighty waters. It is the doom Christ foreshadowed as awaiting those who caused His children to fall (Matt. xviii. 6). The mighty angel, strong to lift the ponderous stone, throws it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence (or, *with a bound*) shall Babylon, the great city, be thrown, and shall not be found any more. At one bound, without a single resting-stage in its downward career, without chance or power of recovery, the vast world-city would fall. She who sat as a queen upon many waters, sinks as a stone in the mighty waters. She will not be found any more. The words "any more," or "no more," are repeated in these verses no less than six times, like a funeral knell over the departed greatness which is described.

(22, 23) **And the voice of harpers . . .**—Better, *the sound . . .* The sounds of mirth and triumph, &c., cease: *the sound of harpers, and musicians, and flute-players, and trumpeters, shall not be heard in thee* ANY MORE: the power of wealth has gone; her own right hand has forgotten her cunning: *every craftsman of every craft shall not be found in thee* ANY MORE: the sound of grinding the corn is at an end: *the sound of millstone shall not be heard in thee* ANY MORE: the cheerful lamps of home and feast are extinguished: *light of lamp shall not shine in thee* ANY MORE: the sounds of domestic joy are silenced: *voice of bridegroom and of bride shall not be heard in thee* ANY MORE. The words are an echo of earlier prophecy: "I destroy from

and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. (24)And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER XIX.—(1) And after these things I heard a great voice of

them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle." It was thus Jeremiah warned Jerusalem of her coming doom (chap. xxv. 10). Now the same judgments are pronounced against the foe of the true Jerusalem.

(23) **For thy merchants were the great . . .**—The judgment does not fall because the merchants were great: it is the sorcery of the next clause which is the true cause of her fall: the merchants are those who traded with her, as well as those who dwelt in her: by "her sorceries" we must understand her artful policy, her attractiveness, and the seductions by which she drew into the meshes of her worldliness and sin the nations around. "In thy sorcery were all the nations led astray" (chap. xiii. 14).

(24) **And in her was found . . .**—It is not by seductiveness only that her guilt is measured: her hands are defiled with blood: the blood of prophets who had witnessed against her: of saints, whose holy lives were a protest against her sins, and so hateful to her; and "*of all who have been slain on the earth.*" (Comp. chap. xvii. 6, and Note there.) It is not meant that literally all the blood shed by violence had been shed by Rome, or any other single city of which Babylon is type: all that is meant is that Babylon, the world city, is founded on those principles, the logical outcome of which is violence, bloodshed, and hostility to the highest right: those who die by her hands, few or many, are the evidence that the whole tendency of her power is against holiness and truth. In the earthly view, we are guilty of the acts we do: in the heavenly view, we are guilty of all that the spirit and sin of our conduct tends to do. The spirit of transgression is seen in one act as well as in many, and as it is the attitude of the spirit that God looks upon, so in a single act may be gathered up the transgression of the whole law. (Comp. chap. xvii. 6, and Note there; see also Jas. ii. 10.) It is the fatal failure to perceive this which leads man to make light of sin, and to undervalue the Cross of Christ.

XIX.

THE CHORUS OF THE HEAVENLY MULTITUDE REJOICING OVER HER FALL.

(1–3) **And after these things I heard . . .**—Or, *I heard, as it were, a mighty voice of a great multitude in the heaven, saying.* The

much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: (2) for true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. (3) And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. (4) And the four and twenty

Chap. xix. 1—4. The joy of the heavenly multitude.

saints who were bidden in the last chapter to rejoice are now heard raising their songs as in one great voice of praise. The song is as follows:—

Alleluia!
The salvation, and the glory, and the power
Are our God's,
Because true and righteous are His judgments,
Because He judged the great harlot, who corrupted the earth in her fornication,
And avenged the blood of His servants out of her hand,
Alleluia.

This last "Alleluia" clearly belongs to the song or chorus. It is separated from the body of it by the descriptive words (verse 3), *And again they said, Alleluia;* or better, *and a second time they have said.* The Evangelist, as he writes, seems to hear once more the strains of the anthem; he writes down the words, and, as the final "Alleluia" bursts forth after a musical pause, he writes, "once more they have said Alleluia." The word Alleluia occurs in this passage no less than four times (verses 1, 3, 4, 6): it is nowhere else used in the New Testament; but it is familiar to us in the Psalms, as fifteen of them begin or end with "Praise ye the Lord," or "Hallelujah;" and the genius of Handel has enshrined the word in imperishable music. The song here does not begin with ascribing "salvation, &c.," to God, as the English version suggests: it rather affirms the fact: the salvation, &c., is God's. It is the echo of the ancient utterance—"Salvation belongeth unto God." It is the triumphant affirmation of the truth by which the Church and children of God had sustained their struggling petitions, as they closed the prayer which Christ Himself had taught them, saying, when too often it seemed to be otherwise, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." So here they give a threefold praise: the salvation, and the glory, and the power are all God's. The manifestation of His power is in the deliverance of His children from the evil, from the great harlot, and in the avenging the blood of His servants out of her hand, "forcing, as it were, out of her hand the price of their blood."

(4) **And the four and twenty . . .**—The twenty-four elders, the representatives of the Church, and the four living beings, the representatives of nature, fell down and worshipped God who sitteth (not "sat," as in the English version) on the throne. These, too, join in the chorus of praise.

elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. (5) And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. (6) And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (7) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (8) And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in

(5-7) **And a voice came.**—From the direction of the throne there came a voice bidding all God's servants rejoice. We are not told whose voice it is. Some have assumed that it is Christ's: it is better to leave it indefinite. In response to the bidding, the voice of praise is heard (like the voice spoken of in chap. xiv. 2), as it were, the voice of a great multitude; and, as it were, the voice of many waters; and, as it were, the voice of mighty thunders. All nature's tones seem mingled in this voice of praise; it is human, it is majestic as the sea, and glorious as the thunder.

The Anthem.

Alleluia!
For the Lord reigned,
The God, the Almighty.
Let us rejoice and exult,
And we will give the glory to Him,
Because the marriage of the Lamb is come,
And His wife hath made herself ready.

In this anthem the word for "reigneth" is not in the present tense, as in the English version; but, though it is translated here "reigned," we must not understand it of the past only: it expresses the exultation of the servants of God that the Kingship of their God is manifested, and vindicated against those who denied, or hated His rule. His reign never ceased; and He has showed that His was a real sovereignty. Their joy rises also from the prospect of the nearer union between the Lamb and His Bride. This close union is more fully spoken of later: here the glorious close is for a moment anticipated: the morning glow announces the coming day: it is near even at the doors. The image of the marriage is familiar. It entered into our Lord's parable (Matt. xxii. 2—10; xxv. 1—10); we catch it in the Psalms and in the Epistles (Ps. xlv., and Eph. v. 23, 30; 2 Cor. xi. 2).

(8) **And to her was granted . . .**—Better, *And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright, pure; for the fine linen is the righteousness* (or, *righteousnesses;* the word is plural) *of the saints.* This verse is not to be taken as part of the song. The song closes with the announcement that the Lamb's wife has made

fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. [9] And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.[a] And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. [10] And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto

[a] Matt. 22. 2.

herself ready. Then follows the explanation of this readiness: she is adorned in fine linen. Her apparel is in contrast to the harlot: it is not purple and scarlet (chaps. xvii. 4 and xviii. 16), but pure white. The symbol is explained: "the fine linen is the righteousness (or, *righteousnesses*) of the saints." The raiment is that which strikes the eye: it has its character, and it indicates the character of the wearer. The harlot attracts by ostentatious colours, the tokens of qualities more conspicuous than abiding, more dazzling than helpful; the Lamb's wife is robed in pure and stainless white, the token of those high, moral, spiritual qualities by which she has been known. The source of these righteousnesses is divine: it is given to her to be so arrayed. It is no fictitious righteousness: it is real, it is hers, though it would never have been hers but for Him, without whom she can do nothing (comp. John xv. 4, 5, and Phil. iii. 8—10): and it is through the wearing of this white flower of a blameless life that she has borne witness for her Lord, and against the spirit of harlotry and sin (Matt. vii. 16—18).

[9] **And he saith unto me . . .**—Who is the speaker? The general and simplest opinion is that it is the angel mentioned in chap. xvii. 1 who speaks. The speaker bids the seer *write:* "Blessed are they who are bidden to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb." This is one of the six benedictions of the Apocalypse (comp. chaps. i. 3; xiv. 13; xx. 6; xxii. 7, 14): it is founded on our Lord's parables (Matt. xxii. 1 and xxv. 1; comp. also chap. iii. 20): the blessing of the call to the marriage supper is more clearly realised now that the day of joy is at hand. We must not draw too sharp distinctions, as some have done, between the bride and the guests: the imagery is varied to give fulness and force to the truths which no emblems can adequately express. The Church of Christ will rest, and feast, and reign with her Lord; and in all the peace, gladness, and triumph of that joy-time God's servants will share. A solemn confirmation of this follows, as in chaps. xxi. 5 and xxii. 6: "these words are true (sayings) of God."

[10] **And I fell at his feet . . .**—The impulse to worship the messenger who had unfolded such visions was not unnatural: the immediate checking of it here and in chap. xxii. 8, 9, on the part of the angel, supplies an indirect evidence of the genuineness of the whole book, and gives it a moral tone immeasurably superior to the vision-books of pretended revelations. *And he saith to me, See* (or, *take heed*) *not* (i.e., *to do it*); *I am a fellow-servant of thee and of thy*

me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: [a] for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. [11] And I saw heaven opened,

[a] ch 22. 9.

brethren who have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. One bond of service unites angels and men: to be servants of God is the highest title they can attain; worship is for God alone. The words "worship God" are most emphatic: "to God give thy worship, and not to me, who am but thy fellow-servant." The angel is his fellow-servant, and at that time he was emphatically so, as he and the Apostle were engaged in one common work—"the testimony of Jesus." The Apostle's work in the world was the testimony of Jesus (chap. i. 2, 9), and the Spirit of prophecy which moved (2 Pet. i. 21) the angel was likewise the testimony of Jesus. One work and one worship belong to both. He whom Apostles worshipped unrebuked (Matt. xxviii. 9, 17) was the one whom all the angels of God were bidden to worship (Ps. xcvii. 7; Heb. i. 6). It is wonderful, with this emphatic witness to our Lord Jesus Christ, any should have undervalued this book of Revelation, as one which failed to honour Him.

[11] **And I saw heaven opened . . .**—Better, *And I saw the heaven opened* (not "opening," but set open, already opened, as in chap. iv. 1), *and behold a white horse, and* (*behold*) *one that sitteth upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judgeth and warreth.* The description reminds us of the opening of the first seal. Again we have the white horse, and the rider. That early vision of a conquering Christ had been first a hope and then a despair, as age after age interposed its obstacles to the manifestation of the sons of God; but now, with added splendour, the vision is renewed: the hopes of the waiting shall not perish for ever. Once more the victorious rider appears, and His name dispels all fear, though the vision has been long in tarrying. At the end it speaks and does not tarry (Habak. ii. 1—4), for He who rides upon the heavens, as it were upon a horse, has His name Faithful and True (Heb. x. 23, and 36—38). This name combines two characteristics: fidelity to promises, trustworthiness; and the power to satisfy every legitimate desire which has been awakened in the hearts of His people; for in Him all hopes find repose, and every ideal is realised. He is further pictured as a warrior. This warrior bridegroom carries us back to Ps. xlv., where a similar combination of marriage joy and martial triumph is found. Righteousness marks His progress in war, as faithfulness is manifested towards those who trust Him (Isa. xi. 4, 5). Here is comfort on the threshold of a vision of deliverance. The book has shown us war, conflict, confusion: the passions of men surging against one another, and dashing like vain waves against God's immutable laws; the world-history is written in blood. We

and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. (12) His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. (13) And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: [a] and his

[a] Isa. 63. 2.

---

blame men for these cruel and desolating wars; but another question rises imperiously. Why does an all-good ruler allow these heart-breaking scenes? If earth's groans pain and trouble us, do they not grieve Him? Where is He that He permits all this? The answer is, "In righteousness He judges and makes war." The worked-out history of the world will make this plain. The righteousness of God is being revealed: all will see it one day; but now the just must live by faith in Him who is faithful and true, and who preserves the germ of all divine life in the history of the world.

(12, 13) **His eyes were as a flame . . .**—Or, rather, *And His eyes are (as) a flame of fire, and upon His head many diadems—(He) having names written, and a name written which no one knows but He Himself — and clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.* On the description here and in verse 5, comp. Notes on chap. i. 14—16. There is no doubt who is before us in this vision. These *flame-like eyes* have been fixed upon the moving scenes of human life, and have been reading the hearts of men, and the true meaning of all events and actions. All things have been naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do (Heb. iv. 13). He wears many *crowns* — diadems — crowns rather of royalty than of victory. Some have thought that the crowns He wears are crowns taken from the heads of the kings who have made war with Him (chap. xvii. 12, 13, and 19). It is needless to suppose this; their crowns were His before they were discrowned. The diadems He wears proclaim that not only over a world-wide empire He is king, but of all nations He is truly king. He is not as an emperor among kings, the head of a federation of princedoms; but He is truly King—King of history, King of life, King of human hearts, King everywhere, over each realm and over all realms, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He has *names written and a name.* The clause having "names written" is omitted in the English version. The authority for its insertion is not entirely satisfactory; but perhaps the balance of evidence is in its favour. He has many names which may be understood, besides a name which no one knows. This is fitting in one who is known to men as Shepherd, Redeemer, Saviour, Prince of Life, but the fulness of Whose love and power none can exhaust, and the depth of Whose wisdom none can fathom. "He knows our names. Thanks be to God, we cannot fathom the depths

name is called The Word of God. (14) And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. (15) And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the

of His." There is more yet to be known of Him in the world to which we go. His vesture is dipped in blood. The prophet Isaiah (chap. lxiii. 2) probably supplied the foundation of this description. (Comp. verse 15.) The blood-red vesture is a fit token of the work He comes to destroy those that destroy the earth—to tread the winepress of the wrath of God; but we cannot forget that He who comes for this came first to shed His own blood. He is, too, "The Word of God." Again we hear this name; it is a name which is, besides other things, significant of Christ's mediating work. He is the Word who was with God, who was God, and who declares God to man. (Comp. John i. 1—4; iii. 13; xiv. 9.) The title the Word, the Word of God—used here and in the Gospel of St. John (chap. i. 2; John i. 1; 1 John i. 1)—is a token of their common authorship. (See *Introduction* and *Excursus A: The Doctrine of the Word*, in Commentary on the Gospel.)

(14) **And the armies . . .**—The words "which were" should be omitted. *The armies in heaven followed Him.* Some would limit these to angels. The apparel which they wear—the fine linen (*byssus*) "which is the righteousness of saints" (see verse 8)—is conclusive against this limited view. The saints who have fought the good fight here, and who loved not their lives unto the death, will share the triumph of their king. (Comp. also chap. xvii. 14.) The horses upon which they are seated are *white.* The raiment they wear is *white, pure.* (Comp. verse 8, and chaps. iii. 4; vii. 14.) The hue of triumph is here, but it is the triumph of righteousness. (Comp. also Ezek. xxxviii. 4.)

(15) **And out of his mouth . . .**—Translate, *And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with* (literally, *in*) *it He may smite the nations: and He* (*Himself*) *shall shepherd them with* (literally, *in*) *a rod of iron: and He* (*Himself*) *treadeth the winepress of the wine of the wrath of the anger of God the All ruler.* The sharp sword is the same that we have read of before (chap. i. 16); there it was called the two-edged sword. The omission of the epithet in this passage, which describes the Word of God as the conqueror and the judge, is not without significance. The sword is now wielded for but one work—the *word* that Christ spoke will judge men at the last day (John xii. 48). The power of this word found an illustration in the falling back of the hostile band which came to take Him in the day of His humiliation (John xviii. 5); yet more gloriously will the power of His word be felt (comp. Isa. xi. 4; Jer. xxiii. 29; 2 Thess. ii. 8) when He will slay the wicked with the word of His mouth. The pas-

winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. [16] And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.[b] [17] And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; [18] that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, *both* free and bond, both small and

[b] ch. 17. 14.

Chap. six. 17. 21. The wild beast and false prophet overthrown.

sage in Ps. ii. 9 must be borne in mind. Christ comes as King; His is a rule in righteousness; those who oppose this kingdom of righteousness find the shepherd's staff as a rod of iron; the stone rejected falls upon the builders, and grinds them to powder. It is thus that the winepress of God's wrath is set up, and the righteous King appears as one who treads it out. (Comp. Isa. lxiii. 1—3.) *He* Himself (the emphasis lies here) treads it. We have again the figure of the vintage made use of. (Comp. chap. xiv. 20.) It is the harvest of retribution; the wicked are filled with the fruit of their own doings; so is the work seen to be the work of the All-Ruler.

[16] **And he hath on his vesture . . .**—The King rides at the head of His host. On His robe, where it spreads out from the waist, His title is inscribed; it proclaims Him to be the one who is the true supreme King of all. Inscriptions on the outer garments were sometimes used by distinguished personages. The title anticipates the final victory; His power is irresistible, His Kingship is universal.

Overthrow of the Wild Beast and of the False Prophet.—The birds of prey gather beforehand (verses 17, 18). The beast and the kings of the earth hostile to the King of kings, gather for war (verse 20). Their defeat and fate (verses 21, 22).

[17, 18] **And I saw an angel . . .**—Better, *And I saw an* (literally, *one*) *angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a great voice, Hither be gathered together to the great supper of God, that ye may eat flesh of kings, and flesh of captains of thousands, and flesh of mighty men, and flesh of horses, and of them that are seated on them, and flesh of all, of free and of bond, and of small and of great.* The angel stands in the sun—the central spot to summon the birds, and the spot where he stands bathed in the sunlight, the symbol of the divine presence. (Comp. chaps. i. 16; x. 1; xii. 1.) The birds of prey are assembled beforehand; the adversaries of the

great. (19) And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. (20) And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that wor-

righteous King have a name to live, but the eagles and vultures are gathered together as though the carcase had already fallen (Matt. xxiv. 28; comp. Ezek. xxxix. 17—20). The supper or banquet is the chief meal in the day, the meal to which guests would be invited. The banquet or supper here is in contrast with the marriage supper of the Lamb (verse 9), and with the great supper (Luke xiv. 16—24) from which the invited guests turned away. All classes—the great and small, the master and slave—are mentioned. Those who follow the world-power, and array themselves in hostility to the true King, belong not to one class, but may be found among all. The war is not between class and class, but between righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and falsehood, Christ and Belial. We must remember that the vision is a great figurative representation of the defeat of the anti-Christian powers and principles in the world; this will save us from misapprehending its purpose, and from a bondaged literalism.

(19) **And I saw the beast, and the kings. . .**—Rather, *I saw the wild beast.* The wild beast and the kings are gathered to make or wage not merely "war," but "*the* war" (the definite article is used; comp. chaps. xvi. 14; xvii. 14) against the King of kings. It has been noticed that the true King is followed by His army—one army, united by one bond, and under one King. The wild beast is supported by diverse armies, owning allegiance to diverse kings, and united only in hostility to good.

(20) **And the beast was taken. . .**—Or, *And the wild beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who did the signs in his presence. . . .* Again the definite article ("*the* signs" or "miracles") recalls to our minds what was before described (chap. xiii. 13); the false prophet is the second wild beast of chap. xiii. He succeeded in deceiving those who received the mark. See Notes on chap. xiii., where their work of deception is described; here our thoughts are fixed upon their doom. *Alive they were cast, the two, into the lake of the fire which burns with brimstone.* The two—the wild beast and the false prophet—who are the anti-Christian leaders are cast into the fiery lake. These leaders are not to be, as we have seen, regarded as particular individuals. It has, indeed, often happened, and will doubtless again happen, that an individual personage places himself at the head of a great anti-Christian movement; yet, in the eye of the seer, such would be but subordinate leaders. The wild

shipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (21) And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

A.D. 96.

CHAPTER XX.—

beast and the false prophet directed by the dragon are the true spiritual chiefs of all such movements. The world-power, whether coarse, ignorant and brutal, or cultured and intellectual, is seized, and consigned to the lake of fire. The imagery here is based upon the Old Testament: the lake, the fire, and the brimstone bring back the geography and the incidents attending the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha. (Comp. Num. xvi. 32—34; Isa. v. 14.) The lake of fire is mentioned here for the first time; we hear of it more frequently afterwards (chaps. xx. 10, 14, 15; xxi. 8). The flames and brimstone, smoke, and other volcanic forces indicating the existence of subterranean fire, might well lead the ancients to place their Tartarus and Gehenna in the under-world. (See Note in Moses Stuart on Rev. xiv. 10.) These supplied the imagery which has become crystallised in the language of after-generations.

(21) **And the remnant were slain. . .**—Better, *And the rest were slain with* (literally, *in*) *the sword of Him who is seated on the horse, which* (*sword*) *proceeded out of His mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.* The rest (*i.e.*, the human beings, the kings and the great and small, who have been led away by the world-powers) were slain with the sword of the King. No human being is described here as being cast into the lake of fire—only the two great leaders, the ideal representatives of evil principles, receive that punishment. The sword which goes out of the King's mouth (comp. verse 15 and chap. i. 16) slays the human allies of evil. That word which is quick and powerful (Heb. iv. 12), that word which Christ spoke in the days of His humiliation, that word which is mighty and life-giving (Jas. i. 18) as well as death-giving, wins at the last. The birds devour the flesh. The pride and beauty of men, their apparent strength, the confederations and systems which they have made so strong for themselves, when their heart was fat as brawn, are proved to be worthless and strengthless; all the men whose hands were mighty find nothing (Ps. lxxvi. 5, 6). Thus, while all flesh is seen to be but grass, and all the goodliness and pride of it but as the flower thereof, the righteous word of the Lord stands for ever, and at the last rises up as a sword to smite down and to slay its enemies. "They were killed," says Bengel, "with the destroying sword of Christ, which is not of steel or iron, but goes out of His mouth, and so is a spiritual weapon of resistless might."

XX.

THE MILLENNIUM.—Some few introductory words on this most

(1) And I saw an angel come | | down from heaven, having

difficult chapter are needful. The outline of incidents described is very simple. An angel descends, lays hold upon the dragon, binds him, and imprisons him in the abyss, where he remains for a thousand years, after which he is loosed for a short time. During this thousand years the martyrs, and those who had not received the mark of the beast, live and reign with Christ. At the close of this period the dragon is loosed; the nations are once more deceived; the camp of the saints is threatened by the dragon, and those whom he has reduced to his service; but the fire from heaven destroys the adversaries, and the dragon is cast into the lake of fire. The general judgment follows. Simple as the vision appears, every interpretation is beset with difficulties. These difficulties are too numerous to be treated of here. Our space will only allow us to indicate the view adopted, though with the greatest hesitation, in this Commentary. (1) The millennium vision is, like so many of the apostolic visions, an ideal picture; it exhibits a state of things which is possible to mankind at any time; for, to use the language of Hengstenberg, "If the earth were to watch and pray for a thousand years, Satan would have nothing on it." Like the vision of the first seal, it shows us that the victory of Christ was a real victory, and has put into man's hand the promise of security against the wicked one's devices. The defeat of Satan (inflicted by redemption) is described as "a fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18), as "a casting out" (John xii. 31), as "a judgment past," "the Prince of this world has been judged" (John xvi. 11). The ideal picture corresponds. "Satan is chained in the abyss, as the angels said by St. Peter to have been delivered into chains of darkness" (2 Pet. ii. 4). (2) But the rejection of Christ's power and victory postpones the realisation of this picture; the sullen refusing of the King's Son, "We will not have this man to reign over us," interposes a barrier against an immediate fulfilment of the vision. But the fulfilment is not utterly lost; the vision is for an appointed time; it will have its realisation, though man's waywardness and unbelief occasion its delay. (3) The vision has its approximate fulfilment as the Church of Christ, in the faith of the reality of her Lord's victory, carries on her warfare against the prince of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. That this approximate fulfilment is not unreal may be seen in the fact that Christendom has replaced heathendom, Christ has taken the throne of the world, the prince of this world has been judged, the ascendency of Christian thought and Christian principles has marvellously humanised and purified the world. To an Irenæus, a Polycarp, a Justin Martyr, a Tertullian, the picture of the world during the Christian centuries would have the aspect of a millennium, when contrasted with the age of Pagan domination and Pagan persecution. In their eyes, accustomed to the darkness of heathenism, the world as influenced by a widely diffused Christianity would seem to be a world in which Christ

the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand

Chap. xx. 1–3. The Millennium. Binding of Satan.

ruled. They would see in the acknowledgment of apostles and martyrs and confessors the wondrous resurrection power of God's truth; they would see how those who fell for Christ had stepped from their forgotten graves to sit down with Christ in His throne. The apostles, the martyrs, the faithful do reign with Christ. The sovereignty of the world belongs far more to St. Paul and St. John than to Nero and Galba. But though thus the saints rise and reign with Christ over Christendom, we can see that this is only an approximate realisation, and falls short of the ideal picture. Christendom established and heathendom overthrown would be a millennium in the eyes of an Ignatius; but the Church of to-day looks for a further and higher fulfilment. Is she justified in this expectation? If the principles laid down elsewhere (see Note on chap. vi.) be correct, the Church is justified in looking for the full realisation of the vision in a future age. She can accept the first-fruits of God's promises, but she will not mistake them for the harvest; she can rejoice in the growth of her Lord's kingdom, but she looks for the day when the powers of evil will be more effectually curbed, and the gospel will have freer course. Then the fulness of Christ's victory will be more clearly seen.

THE BINDING OF SATAN.

(1) **And I saw an angel come down . . .**—Rather, *And I saw an angel descending out of the heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain on* (not merely in his hand, but hanging from it as it would do when on) *his hand.* It is needless to settle who is represented by this angel. It is enough that in the vision he manifests by the key and the chain which he carries that there is power in Him, who has the keys of death and of Hades (chap. i. 18), to bind, as He has death-wounded, him that had the power of death. The bottomless pit is the abyss, as we have had elsewhere (chaps. ix. 1; xi. 7; and xvii. 8. Comp. Luke viii. 31): it is figuratively the abode of the devil and his associate angels (Matt. xxv. 41).

(2) **And he laid hold on the dragon . . .**—Or, *And he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.* The four words are thus used to describe the arch-enemy; they are the same as those used for the same purpose in chap. xii. 9. Over the world he has exercised in every quarter his power as prince of this world, and he has been found fierce as the dragon, subtle as the serpent, the slanderer of God and His people, and the adversary of all righteousness. He is bound as Christ declared (Matt. xii. 29; comp. Col. ii. 15). A thousand years was the length at which Rabbis fixed the duration of Messiah's kingdom. The period is not to be understood literally (see next verse).

years, [3] and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. [4] And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were be-

[3] **And cast him into the bottomless pit . . .**—Rather, *and cast him into the abyss* (same word as in verse 1), *and locked and sealed* (*the door or mouth*) *above him, that he may not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years shall have been finished; after these things he must be loosed for a little time.* The sealing reminds us of the sealing employed when the wicked one had power through man's agency to imprison God's messengers. (Comp. Dan. vi. 17, and Matt. xxvii. 66.) Of the exact moment when this binding and imprisoning took place it is not needful to inquire too curiously. That which in the vision is described as the work of a moment may in the fact and fulfilment be a very gradual work; or rather, the full manifestation of its accomplishment may be only gradually made clear. To fix it, therefore, to any incident (for example, as Hengstenberg is disposed to do to the coronation of Charlemagne), is to fall into the "vicious realism" against which he rightly protests. The same applies to the duration of the imprisonment; it is not to be understood literally any more than the other numbers in the book; it symbolises a lengthened period. This period is followed by the loosing again of the devil for a short time. (See Note on verse 7.

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN.

[4] **And I saw thrones, and they sat . . .**—There is a prominence given to the *thrones*, because the thought of the reign of the saints is uppermost in the mind of the seer. The thrones are seen, and those who sat on them. It has been asked, "By whom are the thrones occupied?" The answer is supplied in the latter part of the verse. Those who are in the latter part said to reign with Christ are clearly those who sit upon the thrones which first caught the prophet's eye; these are all the real servants of God. They appear before the seer in two great classes:—First, the martyrs who have been faithful unto death; for he speaks first of seeing *the souls of those who have been beheaded* (strictly, "slain with the axe," but clearly the special class of beheaded martyrs is to be taken as representing all), *because of the testimony of Jesus, and because of the word of God.* The number of the martyrs is now complete (comp. chap. vi. 11); these form the first class mentioned. Secondly, those who have been faithful in life occupy these thrones. The prophet sees these, even *whosoever did not worship* (during life)

headed for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (5) But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first

the wild beast, nor yet his image, and did not receive the mark (comp. chap. xiii. 10) *on their forehead and upon their hand.* The triumph and sovereignty, whatever they be, are shared by all the faithful. These things are stated as constituting their privileges. They lived, whereas the rest of the dead lived not; they reigned, and judgment was given them. This last has been felt to be a difficulty. What sort of judgment is intended? The passage in Daniel (chap. vii. 22) is clearly suggestive of the present one. The phrase (judgment was given) is not there to be understood as meaning that right was done them (see Note in *Speaker's Commentary* on Daniel), neither must it be so understood here. Judicial powers are given to the saints as to those who occupy thrones; "the chief power in governing" (Gebhardt) is given them (comp. Matt. xix. 28, and 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3); they reign, they judge, they live: the true and full powers of life are seen to be theirs. And is not this the case always? Who, next to Him who knows the secrets of our hearts, exercises judicial powers over men? Do not those whose lives, as we read them, rebuke our own? Truly, those who lived for God, and refused the mark of earthliness, reign and judge us in our worldliness and weakness. This is their sovereign honour here, besides the glad reign in the unseen world.

(5) **But the rest of the dead lived not again . . .**—Rather, *The rest of the dead lived not* (we must omit the word "*again*") *until the thousand years be finished. This is the first resurrection.* In those words we meet one of the keys to the controversy respecting the millennium. What is this resurrection? Is it the resurrection at which the saints shall assume the glorified bodies, and their perfect consummation and bliss? It has been argued that the word must be understood literally as of a bodily resurrection. It is further said that the contrasting words ("the rest of the dead lived not") necessitate this literal interpretation. But there is no reason for restricting the word Resurrection to a literal meaning. The sacred writers frequently use the idea figuratively. They speak of a resurrection which is spiritual; the dead in sin are summoned to rise from the dead that Christ might give them light (comp. Eph. ii. 1, and v. 14); indeed, the figure often underlies the language and arguments of New Testament writers (John v. 24, 25; Rom. vi. 5; 2 Cor. v. 15; Col. ii. 12). But do the words, "the rest of the dead lived not," force upon us so sharp a con-

resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a

trast that we must understand the first resurrection literally? Undoubtedly the words are in contrast. If the words "lived not" necessarily mean that the rest of the dead did not enjoy physical life on earth, then the living with Christ of the saints and the first resurrection must be understood as giving physical life on earth to the saints. But are we bound to thus understand literally the "lived" of verse 4 and the "lived not" of verse 5? There are two or three considerations which will be enough to show that they need not be understood thus. (1) The word "to *live*" is used about sixteen times in the Apocalypse. On nine of these it is applied to the eternal life of God the Father or God the Son; it is twice used in the passage before us (verses 4, 5). Of the remaining five occasions where the word is used, it is four times employed in what can scarcely be other than a figurative sense (chaps. iii. 1; vii. 17; xiii. 14; xix. 20—some *might* doubt the figurative use in this last passage), but only once is it employed in a sense which can fairly be defended as literal (chap. xvi. 3). (2) There will be faithless people during the millennium—the nations to be *deceived* (verse 8). Are we then to picture saints with glorified resurrection bodies living on the earth, which at the same time is tenanted by men and women still in the natural body? (3) There is a resurrection, which surely is the second resurrection, described in verses 12, 13: this last is a general resurrection of the dead, small and great. There seems no adequate reason to affirm that this first resurrection, then, *must* be physical. Our notions of life and death are so circumscribed by the geography of earth, that we seldom give to the word "life" in our thoughts its true richness and fulness of meaning. We fail to remember that the faithful ones who live, because Christ lives, have the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come; we forget that God is not God of the dead, but of the living.

(6) **Blessed and holy is he that hath . . . .**—This is one of the benedictions of the Apocalypse. The blessing on those who have part or share in the first resurrection has this definite feature. On these the second death has not power (or authority). The second death stands in contrast with the first resurrection. The second death is not the mere physical dying; it is rather that more awful death which lies outside the region of the things seen and temporal. Whatever it means, and whatever the conditions which surround it, it is spiritual rather than physical. It is not the life of the body which protects the life of the spirit; it is the living and believing in God which protects from the second death; according to Christ's word of such, "they shall never die" (John xi. 26; comp. John x. 27, 28). Blessed, too, are such in being

thousand years. (7) And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (8) and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog,[a] to gather

Chap. xx. 7—10. The loosing and final overthrow of Satan.

[a] Ezek. 38. 2; 39. 1.

priests and kings (they shall reign). Theirs is the priesthood of life who have offered themselves a living sacrifice to God (Rom. xii. 1). The kingship of life is theirs, who have overcome the world-powers in the word of God and in the blood of the Lamb; these truly reign. (Comp. Note on chap. v. 10.)

THE LOOSING OF SATAN AND HIS FINAL OVERTHROW.

(7) **And when the thousand years are expired.**—Rather, *And when the thousand years have been finished.* The binding of Satan implied restraint put upon his power and freedom of action; the loosing means the removing of these restraints. The reign of Christ with His saints has been a witness to the power of our Master over the wicked one. This witness has been an opportunity also to the world. It was the earthly approximation to the ideal picture. It testified how completely "all power in heaven and in earth was given to Christ," and how there lay, therefore, within the reach of men the power of Him who would tread down their true enemies, and turn His hand against their adversaries (Ps. lxxxi. 13, 14). But the time of opportunity must end. "O that Israel would have hearkened," is a cry that might have its counterpart over the history of earth's lost opportunities. Christendom is planted in the world to be a framework of regenerating power to mankind, just as the Law and its adjuncts were designed to be in Israel. But, as there the old idolatrous influences broke in upon the rule of God's covenant, so here do we find the vision picturing to us how Christendom will be invaded by the influences of the evil one, when mankind has let slip this splendid opportunity of a really golden age.

(8) **And shall go out to deceive the nations.**—Perhaps better, *shall come out*, as the earth is the view-point. The nations deceived and led astray are designated as Gog and Magog. The names are derived from Ezekiel (chaps. xxxviii. and xxxix.). In rabbinical books the names were used to describe the nations who would rise against the reign of the Messiah. The names are to be understood figuratively. No particular nation could be well spoken of as "the nations in the four corners of the earth." The origin of the figure is not difficult. In Ezekiel, Gog is called the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; or, adopting another rendering, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. Magog is mentioned in Gen. x. 2 as one of the sons of Japheth. The name is there associated with Gomer, Madai, and Meshech. Gomer is thought to correspond with the Cimmerians, Madai with the Medes, and Meshech with the Muscovites. Mr. Smith, in his history of Assur-

them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea. [9]And they went up on the

banipal from cuneiform inscriptions, thinks that a certain chief of the Saka (Scythians), named Gaagi, is the same as Gog. The sons of this Gaagi are mentioned in connection with Birighudri, a chief of Madai (Medes). Josephus also identifies Magog with the Scythians. The remembrance of the Scythian invasion lingered long in the minds of Asiatic nations: and the names of those northern nations were adopted as representative of the great and undefined enemies who would in after ages assail the Messiah's kingdom, or wage unprovoked war against the true Israel of God. Ezekiel's language in chap. xxxviii. 17 seems to imply as much. The Evangelist here accepts the names employed by the earlier prophet. Gog and Magog stand for the great host of the nations, and their leaders, who would break forth into uncalled-for hostility against the people of the Lord. It must be remembered that the imagery is derived from the history of Israel. Jerusalem, the beloved city of the true Israel of God, looks out upon her foes. They are Babylon, Egypt, or they may come from the far northern regions, the abode of Gog and Magog, whence the wild and relentless invaders had poured upon the land. Gog and Magog are thus used as typical names. Under the auspices of such, the great gathering of turbulent and reckless enemies of the faith would take place. The hosts of the foes of Jerusalem are described as innumerable as the sand of the sea. This great concourse of countless hosts is moved by hostility to the faith of Christ. The nations, thus multitudinous, have been restrained during the millennial reign. Evil and unbelief have been held in check, but they have not been extinguished. The millennial reign is clearly, therefore, not a period in which the rule of Christ is universally and sincerely accepted. There are powers at work which compete for human affections and interests; but the general acceptance of Christian principles keeps the evil forces in abeyance, and the gracious strength of God limits the power of the arch-enemy. But when the restraints are removed, the long-suppressed evil breaks forth, and the reluctantly submissive nations are gathered together to *the war*—not to battle, as in our version, but to the war—*i.e.*, to the war which has been before spoken of in chaps. xvi. and xix. All the restraints which Christ and Christian teaching had supplied to the world are gradually removed. The Euphrates is dried, the Devil is loosed, the unclean spirits have gone forth, the last phase of the long war between good and evil, between Christ and Belial, has been entered.

[9] **And they went up on the breadth of the earth.**—The hostile multitudes spread like swarms over the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. Jerusalem is the beloved city—in it was the Mount Zion which God loved (Ps. lxxviii. 68). It is the figure of the true spiritual Zion and Jerusalem which has been faithful

breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (10) And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (11) And I saw a great white throne,

Chap. xx. 11—15. The judgment of the world.

and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was

---

to her king. The beloved city has its camp; it is ready for war. It has waged its spiritual warfare against all forms of evil. Its citizens, like the returned exiles (Neh. iv. 17, 18), could never lay down the sword (comp. Eph. vi. 10; John ii. 14; v. 4); but the hostile demonstration is arrested by divine intervention. *There came down fire out of the heaven* (the words "from God" are of doubtful authority) *and devoured them.* The Shechinah light tabernacled over the holy city. Its light was also a flame ready to break forth upon the wicked. (Comp. chaps. i. 14; vii. 15, Note; Heb. xii. 29; 2 Thess. i. 6—10.) There may be allusion to the overthrow of the cities of the plains (Gen. xix. 24), but other incidents may have been in the prophet's mind: the fire which fell from heaven upon the enemies of an earlier prophet, Elijah (2 Kings i. 9—14), and the fire which broke forth from the tabernacle in the wilderness upon those who defied the laws of the God of Israel (Num. xvi. 16, 17, 35; Lev. x. 1, 2). It must be remembered that, in the passage before us, the prophet is using the incidents and actions of the past as imagery, and that the present vision is figurative, though of course not mere empty figure: for Christ will thoroughly purge His floor (Matt. iii. 12).

(10) **And the devil that deceived them . . .**—Better, *And the devil that deceiveth them, or was deceiving them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the wild beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented by day and by night unto the ages of the ages.* The devil cast from heaven (chap. xii. 9), bound in the abyss (chap. xx. 3), is now flung into the flaming lake. There *they* (*i.e.*, the devil, the wild beast, and the false prophet) are tormented unto the ages of ages. (Comp. chap. xiv. 10, 11; and Note on chap. xix. 20.)

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD.—The three enemies have been overthrown and driven forth from the earth which they have sought to destroy (chap. xi. 18). The judgment of human beings must follow.

(11) **And I saw a great white throne . . .**—Or, *And I saw a great white throne, and Him that was seated thereon, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven, and place was not found for them.* The throne is described as great and

found no place for them.
(12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book [a] was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
(13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [1] de-

[a] ch. 3. 5
[1] Or, *the grave.*

white, to set it in strong contrast to other thrones mentioned in the book, *e.g.*, chaps. iv. 4 and xx. 4. It is a white throne in token of the purity of the judgment which follows. He who sits upon it is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It is asked, Who is He that is seated here? Throughout the book God is called "Him that sitteth upon the throne" (chaps. iv. 3 and v. 1); but we must not understand this as excluding the Son of God, who sits with His Father on His throne (chap. iii. 21), and who, as Son of Man, declared that He would sit upon the throne of His glory and divide "all the nations" as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats (Matt. xxv. 31, 32; comp. also chaps. vi. 16 and xi. 15—18). At the face of Him who sits upon the throne the heaven and earth flee. Hengstenberg interprets this of the putting out of the way "all of the irrational creation which had been pressed into the service of sin." Gebhardt interprets it of "the *destruction* of the whole *present* visible *world*." A comparison, however, of the imagery employed in chaps. vi. 12—14 and xvi. 19, 20, should make us cautious of asserting that any great physical catastrophe is described here. Doubtless revolution must precede renewal (chap. xxi. 1); but it is never safe to ground our expectations of the nature of such changes upon language which is confessedly poetical in form. Some physical revolutions do in all probability await our earth, but the eye of the prophet looks more to the moral and spiritual regeneration of the world—more to the spiritual well-being of mankind, than to any physical changes which may synchronise with the culmination of the world's moral history.

(12, 13) **And I saw the dead, small and great . . .**—Or rather, *And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before* (not "God," as in text, but) *the throne, and books* (or, *rolls*) *were opened; and another book* (or, *roll*) *was opened, which is* (*the book*) *of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which had been written in the books* (or, *rolls*) *according to their works. And the sea gave forth the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave forth the dead who were in them; and they were judged each according to their works.* The latter of these verses is added to assure us that the dead, in whatever quarter, must appear before the judgment throne. Death and Hades—"the grave world," and "the great watery grave"—the sea, "the universal hidden region of the dead," give up its prey; for there is One who sits upon the throne who has the keys of death

livered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

(14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (15) And whosoever was not

and Hades (chap. i. 18). It has been said by some that the dead here spoken of as coming forth from the grave are not all the dead, but only "the rest of the dead" mentioned in chap. xx. 5. Those who believe that the first resurrection there mentioned is a literal physical resurrection are compelled to limit the resurrection here to the resurrection only of the remainder of the dead. But the verses before us suggest no limitation, and the language most assuredly tends to the idea that saints and faithful servants of God take part in this later resurrection. If all the saints and righteous men of old are raised prior to the millennium, and take no part in this last judgment scene, then only the faithless and wicked are left to be judged before the great white throne, and as none of these can be found written in the book of life, the bringing forth of that book becomes meaningless. This is one result of vicious literalism of interpretations. The real significance of the scene lies in the vivid picturing of that great and solemn truth that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and that before Him there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed (Matt. x. 26; comp. 1 Cor. iv. 5). Then shall every human life appear in its true light, stripped of all the deceptive adornments which have given a fictitious respectability to ingenious fraud, and a fatal popularity to adroit wickedness and splendid vice. Then shall men be judged, not by rank, or success, or achievement, but according to their works, as it is twice stated here, and according to whether they have any life towards God. The works and the life towards God must be combined. A man may have, from the activities of his Christian works, a name to live and yet be dead: the life-book and the work-book combine to mark the real servant of Christ. If he labours more abundantly than all, it is Christ who works in him, for his life is a life by the faith of the Son of God. (Comp. Gal. ii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 10; Jas. ii. 14—26.)

(14, 15) **And death and hell were cast . . .**—Better, *And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.* The latter part of the verse contains, according to the best MS. authority, the additional words "the lake of fire." We then read, not "This is the second death"—as though the reference were to what went before—but, *This is the second death, the lake of fire.* The last verse then follows, *And if any was not found written in the book* (or, *roll*) *of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.* Thus, three times in these two short verses, like a refrain at the close of each clause, we have the terrible words "the lake of fire." Into this lake of fire Death and Hades are thrown. It is clearly figurative language, implying that Death, the last enemy (1 Cor. xv. 26) is destroyed, together with Hades, who was personified as death's escort (chap. vi.

found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

A.D. 96.
[a] Isa. 65. 17. 2 Pet. 3. 13.

CHAPTER XXI.—[1] And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: [a] for

S). So we read in the next chapter (chap. xxi. 4) "there shall be no more death." The lake of fire into which Death is thrown is the second death! We have read of this before in this book (chaps. ii. 11; xx. 6). It is a death of which the first death—the physical death, now destroyed—was but a faint figure. It is a condition which needs no coarse exaggeration, or vulgar literalisation of the prophetic imagery, to heighten the horror of. Very awful is that spiritual death, which knows not and loves not God, and from which Christ has come to arouse us; more awful must be that second death, in which the spirit, no longer the sinning victim of hereditary evil, has become the victim of habitual choice of wrong, loving darkness rather than light, and choosing alienation rather than reconciliation—the husks of the swine rather than the Father's house. Of the full meaning of the words in their true and *future* force we can have little conception. It is enough for us to remember two things: they are figurative, but they are figurative of *something*.

XXI.

THE FINAL REGENERATION.—ALL THINGS NEW: NEW HEAVENS; NEW EARTH; NEW JERUSALEM (chaps. xxi. 1—xxii. 5).

THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH.

(1) **And I saw a new heaven**.—The hope of the renewal and restitution of all things had been long cherished. Earlier prophets had sanctioned the hope: Isaiah had told of new heavens and new earth (Isa. lxv. 17); Ezekiel had closed his prophecy with the splendid vision of a renewed land of promise (Ezek. xl.—xlviii.); Christ Himself had spoken of the era which He inaugurated as the regeneration (Matt. xix. 28); His followers soon caught the truth that the outcome of the gospel age would be the realisation of all those marvellous visions with which prophets had sustained the fainting hopes of the people of God. The hope was not to be for ever receding as new height after height was surmounted. It will not always be said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth" (Ezek. xii. 22). The fulfilment may seem to tarry; the unbelieving might doubt or scoff (Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 4); but those who felt that the gospel was a power of spiritual regeneration, making all things new (2 Cor. v. 17), learned to look forward to the widest and fullest restoration, and to expect new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 13). The characteristic word which runs throughout the description is the word "*new*." All things are to be made *new*; the heavens and earth are *new*; the Jerusalem is *new*. There are two words which are translated *new* in our English version: one of these (*neos*) relates to time; the other (*kainos*) relates to quality.

the first heaven and the	first earth were passed

The one would be applied to what had recently come into existence; the other to what showed fresh features. The tomb, for example, in which our Lord's body was laid was new, not in the sense that it had been recently hewn out of the rock, but in the sense that it had never been used before; it may have been long made, but it was one wherein never man was yet laid. To describe it the second word (*kainos*) is used (Matt. xxvii. 60 and John xix. 41). In the same way, the wine-skins (called "bottles" in our English version) required for the new wine were not necessarily wine-skins only just prepared for service, but they were skins which had not grown withered, but retained their freshness and elasticity. Here, again, the second word (*kainos*) is employed to describe them. Now, it is this latter word which is used throughout this chapter, and, indeed, throughout the book of Revelation. The newness which is pictured is the newness of freshness: the old, decaying, enfeebling, and corrupting elements are swept away. The aspects and features which will surround the inhabitants of that new earth will be full of novelty to satisfy the progressive instincts of our nature; but the imagery no less conveys the assurance that the conservative instinct, which clings to what is old, and finds sanctity in the past, will not be disregarded. All things may be new, full of fresh and fair beauty; but all things will not necessarily be *strange;* there must be some correspondency between the old and the new, when the new things are called new *heavens*, new *earth*, new *Jerusalem*. The description is figurative, but the spirit of it implies that in the restitution age the sweetness of things which have been loved and familiar will blend with the charm of all that is fresh and new.

And there was no more sea. —Or, better, *And the sea is (exists) not any more.* Among the more detailed features of the new earth, this obliteration of the sea stands first. It is strange that so many commentators should vacillate between literal and figurative interpretations of the chapter; the ornaments and decorations of the new Jerusalem (verses 10 — 21) are treated as symbolical; the annihilation of the sea is considered as literal. It is wiser to leave the literal meaning to the future, and to grasp the spiritual teachings, which are of infinite and present interest. The *sea* has played an important part in the symbolism of the book: out of the sea rose the wild beast (chap. xiii. 1); the purple-clad Babylon sat enthroned upon many waters (chap. xvii. 1); the restless, tumultuous ocean, now discordant with its clamorous waves, now flooding the earth in confederate force; the troubled sea of evil, which cannot rest, and which casts up but mire and dirt (Isa. lvii. 21), is never more to be found on the face of that earth, or near that city whose peace is as a river, and whose righteousness as the waves of the sea (Isa. xlviii. 18), and whose inhabitants are delivered from "the waves of this troublesome world."

away; and there was no more sea.

Chap. xxi. 1—8. The new heavens and new earth.

(2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. (4) And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; [b] and there shall be

Chap. xxi. 3, 4. The voice from the throne.

[b] ch. 7. 17.

---

(2) **And I John saw the holy city . . .**—Better, *And the holy city, new Jerusalem, I saw coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared . . .* The name John is omitted in the best MSS. The new Jerusalem is more fully described later on (verse 10 *et seq.*). The city is also the bride (comp. verses 9, 10). Both images—the "city" and the "bride"—are familiar to the Bible student. The sacred city appears linked to God by a sacred bond. (Comp. Ps. xlv. 13, 14; Isa. lxi. 10; lxii. 4, 5; Gal. iv. 26; Eph. v. 25—27.) The city-bride is now adorned for her Husband. We know what her ornaments are, now that He is about to present her to Himself a glorious Church: the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and her loving obedience to Him (1 Pet. iii. 4), are her jewels. She is seen, not rising from earth or sea, like the foes of righteousness (chap. xiii. 1, 11), but coming down from heaven. The world will never evolve a golden age or ideal state. The new Jerusalem must descend from God. The true pattern, which alone will realise man's highest wishes, is the pattern in the mount of God (Acts vii. 44).

THE FIRST VOICE.—The voice out of the throne (verses 3, 4).

(3) **And I heard a great voice out of heaven . . .**—According to the best MSS. the voice now heard was heard "*out of the throne*," saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them.* Here, as in chap. vii. 15, the translation, "shall dwell," weakens the force of the allusion. The tent, or tabernacle, is in the seer's mind. There is a difference in the prepositions used here and in chap. vii.: in the latter, God was spoken of as tabernacling *over* them; here He tabernacles with them. He not only stretches His cloud-shelter over them, but He is with them. *They shall be His people, and He shall be God with them, their God.* The introduction of the words in italics ("and be") in our version is a weakness; the force of the thought is spoiled. *They* are God's people, and He is their Emmanuel—God with them, their God. The prophet Ezekiel supplies parallel thoughts (Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 28; comp. also Lev. xxvi. 11, 12).

(4) **And God shall wipe away all tears . . .**—Instead of

no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (5) And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.[a] And he said

[a] 2 Cor. 5. 17.

Chap. xxi. 5—8. The voice from Him who is seated on the throne.

"all tears" we should translate "every tear," and so possess the promise in its true and tender form. The first, or former, things are passed away: *death shall not be any longer; neither shall mourning, nor crying, nor pain, be any longer.* The splendid array of negatives come as heralds of the positive peace of the new Jerusalem: no sea, no tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain; with the former things these six shadows pass away from life. "The *mourning* is that grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid" (Abp. Trench). It is the same word that is rendered "wailing" in our English version (chap. xviii. 15). It is used of mourning for the dead. *Crying* is the voice of despair and dismay, as well as sorrow; it is the loud outcry which is the witness that "the times are out of joint." *Pain* includes painful labour and weariness. With the passing away of these there must depart the ground for the often-repeated cry of "Vanity of vanities!" The sad minor of the poet's song will cease, for—

> "Time with a gift of tears,
> Grief with a glass that ran,"

together with "travail and heavy sorrow," shall be no more. On the whole passage, comp. Isa. xxv. 8; lxv. 19.

The Second Voice.—The voice of Him who sitteth on the throne (verses 5—8).

(5) **And he that sat upon the throne . . .**—Better, *And he who sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. And he saith* (the words "unto me" should be omitted) *write; because these words are faithful and true.* It is the Throned one, the One who rules over all things from the beginning, and who has presided over all the changing scenes of earth's history, who speaks; it is He who makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and who causes all things to work together for good to them that love Him, who gives this heart-helping assurance. "I am making all things new." In spite of the moral disorder, the pain and grief, the dark shadows of life and history, the new creation is being prepared, and will rise, like the early creation, out of chaos. The analogy between the old and new creation is the reason why the first chapter of Genesis and the earlier verses of this chapter are appointed as the morning lessons for Septuagesima Sunday; as out of an earth without form and void rose the world of order and beauty, which God pronounced very good, so out of the world, so full of distress and tears, and overshadowed by so many clouds of sin, will emerge the glad new world, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The closing words of the verse, per-

unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (6) And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.[a] I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.[b] (7) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and

[a] ch. 1. 8; 22. 13.

[b] Isa. 55. 1.

haps an instruction from the angel, but more probably still the voice of Him that sits on the throne, adds the further assurance, "These words are true and faithful."

(6) **And he said unto me, It is done.**—Or, rather, *They* (the things promised) *have come to pass.* He spake, and it was done. The assurance is made trebly sure. "I am making all things new." "These words are true." "They are fulfilled." "Twice," says Bengel, "twice it is said in this book, 'It is done.' First at the completion of the wrath of God in chap. xvi. 17, and here again at the making of all things new."

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end . . .—The definite article must be placed before Alpha and Omega. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.* He is the Alpha and Omega, whose words are faithful and true, and He is the beginning and the end, who is before all things and by whom all things consist (Col. i. 17; John i. 1). He finishes as well as begins. He who begins the good work will perform it (Phil. i. 6; Col. i. 20); all grace flows from Him, and all love flows back to Him, who is Love, who is the cause and end of all, who first makes us, and lastly makes us rest in Him. All the unsatisfied yearnings of the heart may find satisfaction in Him. Hence, perhaps, this promise, *I to him that thirsteth will give out of the spring of the water of life freely.* No promise shall fail—the needy and thirsty so often invited to Him may find fresh springs of life in Him. (Comp. Isa. lv. 1; John iv. 10—14; vii. 37, 38.) The blessing is promised freely, as an unbought gift, without money and without price. This is the genius of the good news of God—the gift is free to all. He who understands this will not be afraid to say, "Nothing in my hand I bring;" and he who says this will be he who will also say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," so that he who brings everything brings nothing; and he who brings nothing brings everything, knowing that all is nothing.

(7) **He that overcometh shall inherit all things . . .**—Rather, *He that conquereth shall inherit these things; and I will be to him God, and he shall be to me a son.* The general promise of verse 3 is in part repeated, and this time more individually. Again we catch, as it were, the echo of the promises to the Seven Churches, the blessing is for him that conquereth. The idea of the war and the conquest is a favourite one with St. John (John xvi. 33, and 1 John ii. 13, 14; v. 4, 5; see also Note on chap. ii. 7.) The source and weapon of victory have been before stated: the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony (chap. xii. 11)

he shall be my son. [8] But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with

and the victory of faith (1 John v. 4).

[8] **But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable . . .**—Better, *But for the cowardly and unfaithful* (or, *unbelieving*) *and defiled with abominations, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and for all the false, their part* (*is*) *in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which thing is the second death.* The list here given points to those classes of character which cannot find a place in the Holy City. Nothing that defileth shall enter in. The less glaring faults stand first, the *cowardly* and *unbelieving*. There is a high and holy fear in which the Christian passes the time of his sojourn here (1 Pet. i. 17); but there is a base and selfish fear, a fear of man, which brings a snare; those who have faith enter boldly the strife, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and conquering by faith. The cowardly sink into companionship with the faithless and unbelieving, with the workers of iniquity. The abominations spoken of here have reference to those mentioned in chap. xvii. 4. The characters, it has been thought, form four pairs. Fear and unbelief go hand in hand (Deut. xx. 1—8; Matt. viii. 26); the workers of abomination and the murderers, the fornicators and the sorcerers are united as those who sin in secret; the idolaters and the false, as those who change God's truth into a lie. (Comp. Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5; Phil. iii. 19.) These who are thus shut out from the heavenly city stand in contrast to those who are admitted; yet among those admitted are such who have sinned through fear, faithlessness, and fleshliness. Sin indeed excludes from the city, but it is sin loved, sin unrepented of, which alone can close the gate of the city whose gates lie open day and night.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM DESCRIBED (9—xxii. 5).—Before entering upon this section it is wise to recall once more that the descriptions here given are figurative, and are not to be understood literally. "There is nothing in it as it seems saving the King." This remark may well be thought needless; but the misconceptions and misrepresentations of the Christian's hope have been many and reckless; and, even were this not the case, there is always a certain proportion of people who seem incapable of understanding figurative language. Half the errors of the Church have been due to prosaic-minded men who could not discern the difference between figure and fact; and men of unpoetical and vehement temperament have blundered over these descriptions, and their blunders have discredited the whole Apocalypse in the eyes of some. The following are the features of the heavenly city, which the description seems designed to enforce upon our thoughts. The great and holy

fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (9) And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. (10) And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven

Chaps. xxi. 9—xxii. 5. The heavenly Jerusalem described.

community will be one which draws its glory from God (chaps. xxi. 11, 23; xxii. 5). Its blessings are not for a few, but open to all, for its gates lie open to all quarters (chap. xxi. 12, 13). The heavenly and the earthly will be at one; angels, apostles, and patriarchs are there (chap. xxi. 12, 14). Diverse characters will find entrance there; the gates bear the names of the twelve tribes. The door of admission is alike for all, though diverse characters from diverse quarters will enter in (chap. xxi. 21). It will be the abode of all that is fair and good, and no disproportions will mar its loveliness (chap. xxi. 17, 18). The ancient truths, spoken by various lips, will be found to be eternal truths, full of varied but consistent beauty (chap. xxi. 14, 19, 20). The forms and helps which were needful here will not be needful there (chap. xxi. 22, 23); all that the servants of God have righteously hungered and thirsted for here will be supplied there (chap. xxii. 1, 2). There will be blessings, various, continuous, eternal; new fields of labour and new possibilities of service will be opened there (chap. xxii. 3, 4).

(9) **And there came unto me one of the seven angels . .** —The words "unto me" should be omitted. One of the seven angels which had the seven vials of wrath had shown to the seer the scarlet-clad harlot, the great and guilty Babylon: so here does one of the same company of angels show him the pure Bride of the Lamb, the new and holy Jerusalem.

(10) **And he carried me away in the spirit . . .**—Better, *He carried me away in spirit on to a mountain, great and high.* It is not merely that the height gives a fine view-ground, the symbolism carries us further. The glimpse of God's coming glories is best gained from the consecrated heights of self-surrender and prayer. On a mountain apart—the mountain of supplication and separation from the world—is the light and glory of God best seen. There are Beulah heights and transfiguration heights from which we may gain glimpses of the city and the glory of the Lord of the city. (Comp. Matt. xvii. 1—4.) The angel carried away the seer to a mountain great and high, and showed him (not "that great city," but) *the holy city Jerusalem descending out of the heaven from* (having its origin from) *God.* The tempter

from God, (11) having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (12) and had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: (13) on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on

showed to our Lord the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; the comforting angel shows to our Lord's prophet the city that hath the foundations, and the glory of it—the city that is of God, its builder and maker. (Comp. Heb. xi. 10, where the right rendering is not "a city," but *the city which hath the foundations.*)

(11) **Having the glory of God . . .**—The glory of God is the glorious presence of God, the true Shechinah, of which we have read before (chap. xv. 8, and see verse 23). The light of the city is described: *And her light* (or, *brightness:* it is the light which she gives; the same word is used as that employed in the LXX., Gen. i. 17, for the heavenly bodies) *is like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone crystallising.* On the meaning and appearance of this stone, see Note on chap. iv. 3. It is in all probability a stone transparent and clear as the crystal, but retaining the greenish hue belonging to the jasper. The general brightness of the city was lustrous as the diamond, but shot with the green tint of the emerald bow which swept the throne. (Comp. chap. iv. 3.)

(12, 13) **And had a wall great and high . . .**—Or, better (for the construction is continued), *Having a wall great and high, and having twelve gate-towers, and at the gate-towers twelve angels, and names inscribed which are* (*names*) *of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel: from the sun-rising* (*i.e.*, facing east) *three gate-towers; from the north three gate-towers, from the south three gate-towers; from the sun-setting three gate-towers.* On this arrangement of gates Num. ii., Ezek. xlviii., and Rev. vii. should be compared. In the encampment in the wilderness (Num. ii.) the tribes were arranged as follows: on the east, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun; on the south, Reuben, Simeon, Gad; on the west, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin: on the north, Dan, Asher, Naphtali. There is perhaps allusion in the present passage to this wilderness encampment, and to the re-adjustment of the order of the tribes in Ezekiel (chap. xlviii.); but there is more than order here: the gates lie open to all quarters; there is no refusal of admission to any people. The representatives of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, are (chap. vii. 9) in the city of Christ; in Him there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all are one. The diversities of human nationality and character, of age and race, and climate, are brought into one com-

the west three gates. (14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (15) And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure

Chap. xxi. 15—17. The measurement of the city.

munion and fellowship. (Comp. Note on chap. vii. 4.) "The wall great and high" is mentioned to assure us of the security and peace of that city where no foe "or thief approacheth" (Isa. xxvi. 1; Zech. ii. 5).

(14) **And the wall of the city had . . .**—Or, rather, *And the wall of the city having twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* There were twelve large stones forming the basement of the wall, the names of the Apostles were inscribed on these. The whole Old and New Testament Church is represented in the appearance of the city; but the work of the Apostles receives its special recognition; it is on their teaching and witness for Christ that the great spiritual Jerusalem is built. There is complete harmony of thought here between St. Paul and St. John. St. Paul described the Church as built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone (Eph. ii. 20). We may compare the same illustration used by our Lord (Matt. xvi. 18) and afterwards by St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 4—6). The argument that St. John could not be the writer of the Apocalypse because he speaks of the Apostles (and so includes himself) as the foundation-stones of the celestial city, might be applied with equal wisdom against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians; it is, moreover, a class of argument which betrays a tendency to confusion of thought, and to misapprehension of the meaning and value of symbols. Historically and doctrinally the Church of Christ is built upon the foundations here described; our creeds declare an acknowledgment of a catholic and *apostolic* Church. Note likewise the recurrence of the name, the *Lamb*, used to describe our Lord. He is still the Lamb; the writer lingers over the well and early known image. (Comp. John i. 29, 36.)

THE MEASUREMENT OF THE CITY.

(15) **And he that talked with me . . .**—Or, better, *And he who was talking with me had a golden reed . . .* The allusion here is to the angel mentioned in Ezekiel (Ezek. xv. 3); the reed, or measuring rod, is of gold, that used in chap. xi. 1 was not said to be of gold; the measurement there was the symbol of preservation amid impending danger; the measuring here is more glorious—it is measuring which exhibits the beauty and proportion of the city which is now dwelling at peace. Gold is one of the features of the city; the street is gold (verses 18, 21); it may stand as a token of the wealth (Ps. lxxii. 15; 1 Kings x. 14—21) of the royal city; but the wealth of that city is love. (Comp. Note on chap. iii. 18.)

the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. (16) And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. (17) And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. (18) And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city

Chap. xxi. 18–21. The precious stones.

(16) **And the city lieth four-square . . .**—The city is four-square, because the length and breadth are equal; but it is added that the height also is equal to the length and breadth, the city thus presents the symbol of perfect symmetry; this is all that is needed. Many interpreters are nervously anxious about the monstrous appearance of a city whose walls measured three thousand stadii (the word rendered "furlongs" is properly *stadii*); but there is no need to be nervous about the symbols; the city is not designed, any more than the vision of chap. iv., or the vision of Ezekiel (chap. i.) to be represented by painting to the eye: the attempt to do so only ends in the production of grotesque and profane pictures. It is not needful, however, in this case to suppose the actual wall to have been 3,000 stadii in height; the city is placed on a hill, the foundations are upon the holy hill, and the deep strong mountain foundations may be included in the measurement. The main thought, however, is to realise the harmony and proportion of that community, in which broad and low and high will meet, and in which no truth will be exaggerated or distorted; in which no disproportioned adjustments will mar its social order; in which all those who are inbuilt as living stones will be measured, not by the false estimates of worldly thoughts (comp. Jas. ii. 4), but by the golden reed of the sanctuary.

(17) **And he measured the wall thereof . . .**—Better, *And he measured its wall by an hundred and forty-four cubits* (*i.e.*, in height), *man's measure, which is angel's.* The measurement is in man's measure, but the reed was handled by an angel; the measure is true for men and true for angels; it may mean that the angel used the ordinary human measure, but may it not imply that the vision is true for all, for the earthly and for the heavenly? it is man's measure, it is angel's measure; the human will not find the picture untrue, though the city is not literal: it is figurative, but not mere figure. The recurrence of the number hundred and forty-four recalls to us the figurative character of the description. (Comp. Note on chap. vii. 4.)

THE BUILDING OR MATERIAL OF THE CITY.

(18) **And the building of the wall . . .**—Or, *And the building-*

was pure gold, like unto clear glass. (19) And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chryso-

---

work (or, *the masonry*, so Alford) *of the wall of it was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass.* The general aspect of the city was jasper-like, because the material of the wall was of the jasper stone. On this stone, see Note on chap. iv. 3, and on verse 11 above. The city was gold. On the meaning of the gold see Note on verse 15 and on chap. iii. 18. To what has been said may be added the following: —"Gold has an inalienable reference to the sun itself, consequently, to the symbol of the face of God, or Christ, *i.e.*, to the manifestation of God's love" (Lange).

The wealth of heaven *is* love; love is the circulating medium of all holy activity and of all holy work: all who dwell within the heavenly city are encompassed by it; all who tread the streets of that city move along the ways of love; no dimness or obscuring motives of self-interest mar its lustre—the gold is clear as pure glass.

(19) **And the foundations of the wall . . .**—Better, *The foundations of the wall of the city (were) adorned with every precious stone.* We may compare the adornment of the harlot (chap. xvii. 4). Her robe was decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, has her beautiful ornaments, richer and rarer than those which adorned the world-mistress. The comparison reminds us, in a vivid and figurative way, of our Master's often-repeated teaching. He that saveth his life, loseth it; he that loseth, saveth it; he that is content to pass by the dazzling attractions of the world, refusing splendour from the outstretched hand of Babylon, will win the true spiritual riches. There is no man that has turned away for Christ's sake from the attractions of the world-spirit, that hath forsaken houses and lands for Christ's sake and the gospel, but shall receive manifold more, &c. (Mark x. 28—31). The "jewels of right celestial worth" are part of the heritage of him who can nobly hold cheap the degrading hire of the world. (Comp. Isa. liv. 12.)

The foundations are various. There were in the foundation of the Church diversities of gifts and administrations, but the same Lord and the same Spirit. In the heavenly city we have harmony, not monotony; variety, not sameness; unity, not uniformity. The stones are not arranged in the order of the high priest's breastplate, but according to their various shades of colour, beginning from the foundation.

1. *Jaspis*, dark opaque green.
2. *Sapphirus*, Lapis-lazuli, opaque blue.
3. *Chalcedon*, an Emerald of a greenish hue.

lyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

[21] And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold,

4. *Smaragdus*, bright transparent green.
5. *Sardonyx*, white and red.
6. *Sardius*, bright red.
7. *Chrysolite*, our Topaz, bright yellow.
8. *Beryl*, bluish green.
9. *Topazion*, or Peridot, yellowish green.
10. *Chrysoprasus*, a darker shade of the same colour.
11. *Hyacinthus*, Sapphire, sky blue.
12. *Amethystus*, violet.

"Chrysoprasus is probably an error for Chrysopaston, a dark blue stone, studded with gold, by which substitution all the shades of blue will follow each other." (See King, *On Gems.*)

With this blended harmony of colour the foundation-stones would encircle the heavenly city as with a rainbow belt. In the seer's view the light of the heavenly city would shine with hues that betoken the advent of the morning. The varying tints would glow like pledges of a dayspring from on high.

"Along the tingling desert of the sky,
Beyond the circle of the conscious hills
Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as glass
The first foundations of that new, near Day,
Which should be builded out of heaven to God.
. . . . Jasper first, I said;
And second, sapphire; third, chalcedony;
The rest in order;—last, an amethyst."

The foundation-stones are twelve. "As twelve, they indicate their numerical completeness (chaps. vii. and xiv.); as shining with a common lustre, their unity; as stones of different hues, their manifoldness; as brilliant stones, the glorification of this earthly life through the light of Heaven" (Lange).

[21] **And the twelve gates . . .**—Or, *gate-towers.* Each gate was of one pearl—*i.e.*, made out of one pearl. The foundations are diverse; the gates are alike. There is one way, though there are many roads; one mode of entrance, through twelve gates. All find entrance through one new and living Way (John xiv. 6; Acts iv. 11, 12; 1 Cor. iii. 11; Heb. x. 20). The pearl was esteemed of the greatest value among the ancients; it is an appropriate emblem of the highest truth, and so of Him who is the Truth as well as the Way of Life. Lord Bacon compared truth to a pearl "that showeth best by day." Another feature may be added. It is the only precious stone which the art and skill of man cannot improve. The tools of the artificer may give fresh lustre to the emerald and the sapphire; but he must lift no tool upon the pearl. So is it with the truth, which sets men free (1 Cor. iii. 10). Through truth, and Him who is Truth, we enter the city; and *the street of the city was gold, pure as transparent glass.* (See Note on verse 18.)

as it were transparent glass. (22) And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (23) And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:[a] for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. (24) And the nations of them which

[a] Isa. 60. 19.

---

(22) **And I saw no temple therein . . .**—Rather, *And temple I saw not in it, for the Lord God the Almighty is her temple, and the Lamb.* In Ezekiel's vision the vast and splendid proportions of the Temple formed a conspicuous part: its gigantic proportions declared it to be figurative (Ezek. xlviii. 8—20); but the present vision passes on to a higher state of things. "I saw no temple:" Ezekiel's vision declared that the literal temple would be replaced by a far more glorious spiritual temple. The age of the Christian Church succeeds the age of the Jewish temple-worship; the age of the Church triumphing will succeed the age of the Church toiling; and there the external organisations, helps, and instrumentalities required for the edifying of the body of Christ will no longer be needed. Tongues, prophecies, knowledge, may pass away (1 Cor. xiii. 9; Eph. iv. 11—13); churches will disappear, absorbed in the one glorious Church: ministries, missionary organisations, helps, governments, may cease. *There* God is all. The Lord is there—the temple, the sanctuary, the dwelling-place of His people. (Comp. Ezek. xlviii. 35.) Every merely local aspect of worship is at an end (John iv. 21—24).

(23) **And the city had no need of the sun . . .**—Rather, *And the city hath not need of the sun, nor of the moon that they should shine on* (or, *for*) *her; for the glory of God enlightened her, and her lamp is the Lamb.* The Shechinah is again alluded to. Light is the emblem of knowledge and holiness. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John i. 5). Christ the Lamb came as the Light of the World. Now in the heavenly Jerusalem is the light seen as a lamp that burneth. The imagery is drawn from Isaiah. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isa. lx. 19). No more will there be needed subsidiary or intermediate luminaries. He who makes the righteous to shine like stars, and causes His churches to shine like lights in the world, will be Himself the Light and Sun of His people: they shall see Him as He is. It is again to be noticed that the emblem of the Lamb is used to describe our Lord in this verse, and in the last, as it was also in verse 14. The memory of Christ's work on earth is never obliterated: still in the intense splendour and joy of that city of light the remembrance of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter gives depth and fulness to its joy.

(24) **And the nations of them which are saved . . .**—We

are saved shall walk in the light of it: [a] and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. (25) And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: [b] for there shall be no night there. (26) And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. (27) And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[a] Isa. 60. 3.

[b] Isa. 60. 11.

---

must omit, with the best MSS., the words "of them which are saved," and read, *And the nations shall walk by means of its light, and the kings of the earth carry their glory into her.* The outlook of the prophet is from the loneliness and depression of the then persecuted and despised churches; but in the vision he sees her beautiful and enlarged and honoured. All nations and peoples flock within the walls: it is the echo of the ancient prophecies. "All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." The Church and kingdom of Christ increase without end; and all will cast their glory at His feet, and call Him blessed in whom all have been blessed (Ps. lxxii. 11, 17).

(25, 26) **And the gates of it . . .**—Better, *And the gates* (or, *gate-towers*) *shall never be shut by day, for night shall not be there.* The gates shall never be shut: all day they shall be open, and that day shall be for ever, for there shall be no night there. All that darkens—the sin that brings night on the soul; the sorrow that brings night on the heart—shall be banished for ever. In peace by day, the city gates will be open; nor can there be night when God the Almighty is the Sun. (Comp. Isa. lx. 11; Ezek. xxxviii. 11.) Through its open gates *they* (i.e., *men*) *will bring the glory and honour of the nations into her.* As men find that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and that their strength is in Christ, without whom they can do nothing, so in like manner will their lives bring back to Him the lustre of all their good achievements.

(27) **And there shall in no wise enter into . . .**—Better, *And there shall never enter into her anything unclean, and he that worketh abomination and falsehood, but only* (or, *except*) *they that have been written in the book of life of the Lamb.* The gates stand open always, but no evil thing may find a home there. The emphatic repetition here (see verse 8) of the idea that all sin is excluded, is in harmony with all other Scripture: no unholiness can dwell in the presence of the holy God. The allusion is evidently to the care of the Jews to exclude all things unclean from the precincts of the sanctuary. The legal and ceremonial defilement had its spiritual significance, which the Apostles utilised elsewhere. (Comp. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; vii. 1; Rev. xviii. 4. On the "book of life," see chap. xx. 12.)

CHAPTER XXII.— A.D. 96.
(1) And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (2) In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of

XXII.

THE RESTORED PARADISE (verses 1—5).—These five verses complete the description of the new heavens and new earth. The features of this last section reflect those of the first and forfeited paradise: the tree of life and the river that flows by the trees are here, and the happy and willing service of God is restored (verses 3, 4), and the curse has disappeared.

(1) **And he shewed me a pure river . . .**—The adjective "pure" must be omitted, as it is wanting in the best MSS. The river is full of water, and that water is the emblem of life: it is the beautiful symbol of life in its gladness, purity, activity, and fulness. The garden of Eden (Gen. ii. 10) had its river. Even in the wilderness Israel had from the smitten rock the water which gushed out like a river (Ps. cv. 41) Prophets, in their pictures of the ages of blessing, almost invariably introduced the river, or broad stream. Joel saw a fountain out of the house of the Lord (Joel iii. 18). Zechariah spoke of living waters from Jerusalem (Zech. xiv. 8); but Ezekiel had the fullest vision when he beheld the stream which deepened and broadened in its onward progress from under the threshold of the house of God, and carried life in its train: everything lived whither the water came (Ezek. xlvii. 9); thus did all prophets speak of the river of God's pleasures (Ps. xxxvi. 8). The teaching of our Lord threw new light on the prophetic imagery; the pure delights of spiritual joy and communion with God were vouchsafed to men by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life. In the bestowal of that spirit of life did Christ give true satisfaction to the thirsting souls of men. (Comp. John iv. 10—14; vii. 37—39.) The source of the river is in the *throne*. Ezekiel's river took rise in the temple; but in our vision there is no temple (chap. xxi. 22). We are brought nearer, even to the throne: it is the throne (not "thrones")—one throne of God and the Lamb. (Comp. chap. iii. 21.)

(2) **In the midst of the street of it . . .**—Or rather, *In the midst of the street of it, and of the river, on one side and on the other* (*was*) *a tree of life, yielding twelve fruits, according to each month giving its fruit; and the leaves of the tree are for healing of the nations.* The hunger as well as the thirst of the spirit is to be satisfied (Matt. v. 6). The tree of life, as well as the river of life, is to be found in the new and better Eden (Gen. ii. 9; iii. 22). The vision of Ezekiel is exactly parallel to the present: "On the border of the river there was wood very much, on both sides: every kind of tree; its leaf withers not, and its fruit ceases not; all months does it ripen; its fruit serves for food, and its leaf

the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. (3) And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: (4) and they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their fore-

for healing" (Ezek. xlvii. 7—12). The twelve manner of fruit: The recurrence of the number—twelve—is to be noticed, for here, too, as well as in the foundations and gates of the city, we have variety allied with unity. Diverse and seasonable fruits, and yet one tree of life. Thus does the Almighty wisdom feed His people with food convenient for them (Prov. xxx. 8), though, in one sense, there is but one food for all (John vi. 31); for true divine wisdom is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her (Prov. iii. 18). That wisdom is not the mere knowledge of things (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has no place in new Eden); but it is rather the knowledge of life which makes the knowledge of things available to the highest good. (Comp. 1 Cor. i. 22—24, 30; Jas. iii. 17; Prov. viii.)

(3) **And there shall be no more curse . . .**—Better, *And every curse, or accursed thing, shall not be any longer.* There may be an allusion to Josh. vii. 12; there is certainly a borrowing of language from Zechariah (Zech. xiv. 11). All accursed things are removed, and with them passes the curse. The blessing of God's presence, and the blessing of God's rule take the place of the ascendancy of evil over the groaning creation (Rom. viii. 22). "The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it." The song of the Psalmist receives new force: "the Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof;" the accursed things, even all things that offend, are gathered out of the kingdom (Matt. xiii. 41).

(3, 4) **And his servants shall serve him . . .**—We turn from the city to the inhabitants. They are described as serving Him, seeing Him, and resembling Him: they shall serve Him: they shall offer Him the service of the priesthood—the word employed is that used of temple service. The word translated "servants" is the word which the Apostles used when they spoke of themselves as *slaves* of Jesus Christ, owned as well as employed by Him (Phil. i. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1; Jude, verse 1). Their service here was discharged in the midst of discouragements and in difficulty; and they walked by faith, not by sight. Now the servants shall serve without hindrance or opposition, and they shall be encouraged by His immediate presence. "They *shall see his face*;" they shall know even as they are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12); they shall see Him as He is. No wonder, then, that he should add (and observe that the thought is exactly that which occurs in the First Epistle of St

heads. (5) And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; [a] for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (6) And he said unto me, These

[a] ch. 21. 23.

John (1 John iii. 2): "His name shall be in (or, *on*) their foreheads." The *name* stands for what God is in holiness and righteousness, purity and love. The name on the forehead indicates their resemblance to their Master. On earth the servants of God are changed from glory to glory into the same image (2 Cor. iii. 18). They aim to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. v. 48); but when they see God as He is, they shall be like Him. His name is on their foreheads, for they behold His face: they wake up after His likeness, and they are satisfied (Ps. xvii. 15). There is a divine paradox in the double truth: those who are like God see Him, and those who see Him are like Him (Matt. v. 8). "There will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of Him; and though in these stormy seas, where we are now driven up and down, His Spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters, and we are left to cast anchors out of the stern and wish for the day, that day will come, when, with the evangelist on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be no more curse, but His servants shall serve Him, and shall see His face" (Ruskin).

(5) **And there shall be no night there . . .**—Rather, *And night shall not be any more, and (they shall not have) need of the light of lamp, and of light of sun, because the Lord God shall give light upon them, and they shall reign unto the ages of ages.* There shall be no night. Twice is it said (chap. xxi. 25) that all darkness shall cease; the darkness in which the saints and sorrowing walked shall be dispelled, when God gives them light. No artificial light is needed, since He who is Light is their light. Those who were children of light now dwell in the light of God's countenance; and they reign who were made kings and priests to God (chap. i. 6). With this utterance the visions of the Apocalypse close. The saints of God have been seen in the bitterness and toilfulness of their struggle and pilgrimage towards the Holy City; but from point to point they have made progress. They have gone from strength to strength, unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Zion. The Lord God is their sun and shield; He has given grace; He now gives glory. No good thing has been withheld; light, life, and love are theirs. "O Lord God of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12).

(6–21) These verses contain the concluding words. It is the Epilogue of the Book; it deals with practical exhortations, warnings, and blessings.

WORDS OF CONFIRMATION AND WARNING.

(6) **And he said unto me . . .**—It is the angel who speaks.

sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

Chap. xxii. 6—15. Words of confirmation.

(7) Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (8) And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I

(Comp. chap. xxi. and verse 9 of this chapter). In verse 7 we hear the words of Christ Himself. *These sayings* (or, *words*) *are faithful and true.* The reference is to the whole book. The book contains the Revelation of the faithful and true witness (chap. iii. 14), whose words are faithful, trustworthy, and fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him. Nor is there reason to doubt this; for "*the Lord, the God of the spirits of the Prophets*—the God whose spirit moved the holy men of old to speak (2 Pet. i. 21)—*sent His angel to show to His servants things which must come to pass shortly.*" (Comp. Note on chap. i. 1.)

(7) **Behold, I come quickly.**—The words of Christ Himself follow (perhaps quoted by the angel), to confirm the declaration of the last verse. These confirming words are an embodiment of the spirit of the whole Apocalypse. *And behold I am coming quickly!* The Apocalypse is the revelation of the coming One; it reveals the dealings of Him who came, who comes, and is to come. (Comp. Note on chap. i. 4.) The blessing given in chap. i. 3 is in part repeated here, but it is a benediction emphatically on those who keep the words of the book. *Blessed is he who keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.* It is not in reading, or wondering, or talking, but in keeping, that the blessing comes. He that loves Christ will keep His commandments (John xiv. 15), even as Christ loved His Father, and kept His commandments (John xv. 10). Those who so keep the sayings or words of Christ in this book will stand firm as those who have built upon the rock (Matt. vii. 24, 25). The blessing of Christ to such was victory over death. "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death" (John viii. 51).

(8) **And I John saw these things . . .**—Or, rather, *And I John am he who hears and sees these things.* The words of the angel are confirmed by the words of Christ. Now we have the confirmatory testimony of the seer to the truth of the vision. The declaration reminds us of the opening of the Epistle of St. John: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John i. 1—3). It is no mere dream or ingenious fancy of his own that he has recorded; it is a veritable revelation.

And when I had heard . . .—Or better, *When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who was showing me these things.* Wonder and awe took possession of the seer, and for the second time he was about

had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. (9) Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: [a] for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. (10) And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. (11) He that is unjust, let him be unjust

[a] ch. 19. 10.

---

to offer unlawful homage to the angel-minister. (Comp. chap. xix. 10.) This twice offered and twice refused worship is full of teaching. To render to all their due is wise and seemly and Christlike; to offer exaggerated homage to any is to invert God's order, and to degrade by pretending to exalt man whose true glory is that he is God's creation.

(9) **Then saith he unto me . . .**—Better, *And he saith to me, See* (or, *Take heed*) *not. I am a fellow servant of thee and of thy brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book; worship God* (or, *to God give worship*). This rebuke is similar to that given in chap. xix. It is a wide affirmation of the truth that all—whether angels, or prophets, or simple faithful followers of Christ—are united in a grand bond of common devotion and common service to the same Lord.

(10) **And he saith to me . . .**—The angel, in contrast to the injunctions given to Daniel (Dan. xii. 9—13), bids the prophet "Seal not the words of the prophecy": the reason is added, "for the time is near." "Such is ever the difference between the prophecy of the old, and the prophecy of the new dispensation. The one belonged to a preliminary and prefatory state; the other to a completive and final condition. However long the gospel age may have lasted, or may yet continue, *it is the last time* (1 John ii. 18): after it there is none other: then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14), (Dean Vaughan).

(11) **He that is unjust, let him be unjust . . .**—Better, *Let him that is unjust, do injustice still; and let the foul pollute himself still; and let the righteous do righteousness still; and let the holy sanctify himself still.* Two pairs are selected to stand as representatives of the good and of the bad: in these four are included all classes of godly and ungodly: those who sin against society, and those who sin against themselves: those who act honourably, and those who keep themselves pure. But what does the verse mean? Does it mean that the time is so short that it is hardly sufficient to allow of men reforming themselves, so as to be ready for their Lord, and that therefore the lesson is, let those who would be ready for Him remember that *now* is the day of salvation? This is the view adopted by some; it contains a truth, but the meaning of the verse seems more general. Is it not the declaration of the ever terrible truth, that men are building up

still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (12) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.[a] (13) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.[b] (14) Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to

[a] Rom. 2. 6.

[b] Isa. 41. 4; 44. 6.

their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives? "Sow an act—reap a habit: sow a habit—reap a character: sow a character—reap a destiny." The righteous become righteous: the godly become godly.

"Thus, all characters
Must shrink or widen, as our wine-skins do,
For more or less that we can pass in them:
And added years give ever a new key
To fixed prediction."

So slowly, but surely, may the power of being masters of our fate pass out of our hands. It is in this law of our nature that the key to many of the darkest problems of the future may lie; and not without a solemn declaration of this law does the Book of Revelation close.

(12) **And, behold, I come quickly . . .**—Rather, *Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to give back to each one as his work is.* To give back to each: here we have the truth declared by St. Paul uttered in words borrowed from Isaiah (Isa. xl. 10). "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," wrote St. Paul (Gal. vi. 7, 8): "God gives back to each one his work," says St. John.

(13) **I am Alpha . . .**—Here (as in chap. xxi. 6) we should render, *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.* (See Note as above, and comp. John i. 1; Isa. xliv. 6.) The repetition of these glorious titles is not a mere idle repetition, or designed to give a rhetorical fulness to the peroration of the book: it is closely allied with the preceding thought. The warning has been given that men by continuing in sin (verse 11) are inviting against themselves the law by which act ripens to habit, and habit makes character, and character forms destiny. The moral laws set going by sin work thus:—Retribution is no dream: it is a terrible fact: it is written large over nature. But the eternal laws of God, though righteously ordered, are not God: the refuge from the eternal laws which we invoke against ourselves by our sin is to be found in the Eternal God: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." For those hunted by the wickedness of their own doings, God Himself provides a refuge: underneath all laws are the everlasting arms (Deut. xxxiii. 27). The next verses set the way of refuge and safety before us.

(14) **Blessed are they that do his commandments . . .**—The reading of two of the best MSS. is, "Blessed are they that

the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (15) For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (16) I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the

wash their robes." If we adopt, as we probably ought, this reading, the line of thought suggested above is helped forward: there is in Him who is the First and the Last, refuge from the power of sin and law against which such solemn warning has been given. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin: the best who have striven and conquered were victors not by their own might, but by the blood of the Lamb (chap. xii. 11). If, however, we follow the Received text, we have a benediction which echoes the blessing promised to obedience in verses 7, 9: this echoing of promises from point to point is in harmony with the spirit of the whole epilogue. (Comp. verses 7, 9; and 7, 12.) The special blessing held out to those who wash their robes (or do His commandments) is the right, or authority over the tree of life. *Blessed are they . . . that they may have* (and continue to have) *authority over the tree of life, and that they may enter in by the gates into the city.* Admission into the city by the gate, which is of one pearl, and the continuous access to the tree of life, are the privileges of the faithful; and these privileges are free to all, for warnings do not forfeit privileges, but rather do they urge us to use them.

(15) **For without are dogs and sorcerers . . .**—Better, *Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one loving and doing falsehood.* The language is again an echo of earlier words. (See chap. xxi. 8.) The allusion to the dogs outside the city is hardly appreciated by Westerns. In the East, however, "troops of hungry and semi-wild dogs used to wander about the fields and streets of the cities, devouring dead bodies and other offal (1 Kings xiv. 11; xvi. 4; xxi. 19; xxii. 38; 2 Kings ix. 10, 36; Jer. xv. 3; Ps. lix. 6), and thus became such objects of dislike that fierce and cruel enemies are poetically styled *dogs* in Ps. xxii. 16, 20." The dog, moreover, was an unclean animal; dogs, therefore, are represented as outside the city, because nothing unclean is allowed to enter. The sins enumerated here are similar to those mentioned in the last chapter (verse 8); it is the reiteration, therefore, of the warning that those who would enter in must break off their sins by righteousness.

(16) **I Jesus have sent mine angel . . .**—The warning is followed by the voice of our Lord Himself testifying to the truth of the revelation made, *I Jesus sent* (not "have sent," as in the English version) *my angel to testify to you these things to the churches.* But it is not merely a message, or the confirmation of a message that we

offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.
(17) And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.[a] (18) For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:[b] (19) and if any man shall take away

Chap. xxii. 17. The final invitation.

[a] Isa. 55. 1.

Chap. xxii. 18—19. The final warning.

[b] Deut. iv. 2; Prov. 30. 6.

---

have—we have also stated what Christ is—the root and pledge of hope to all. *I am the root and offspring of David, and the star, the bright, the morning (star).* He is David's Lord and David's Son, possessing David's throne (Matt. xxii. 42—45; Luke i. 32); He is the bright star which leads up the dawn of everlasting day (Mal. iv. 2; 2 Pet. i. 19).

(17) **And the Spirit and the bride say, Come . . .**—The cry of all creation is for its true Lord; the cry of the Spirit in prophecies and in the hearts of God's people is for the coming Lord—the bride waiting for the bridegroom cries "Come." The Apocalypse is the book of the coming One; it ends with the cry that the coming One would come (comp. verse 20); but let those who thirst for His coming come to Him. We may draw near to Him, who is drawing near to us: *let him that thirsteth, come; let him that will take the water of life freely.* (Comp. John vii. 37.) "The power of the whole gospel," says Bengel, "concentrates itself in this, that one should be able to respond to this Come, and repeat it from the heart."

(18—19) **I testify unto every man that heareth.**—Omit "For," and read, *I testify to every one that hears . . .* The "I" is emphatic; it introduces the final warning; the revelation must not be tampered with. *If any one shall have added to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any one shall have taken away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from the tree of life, and out of the holy city which are written* (or printed) *in this book.* We may compare Deut. iv. 2, and xii. 32. The words are a solemn protest against the spirit which handles rashly or deceitfully the word of God; which adds its own thoughts, or makes its wishes the parent of its interpretations; which dilutes the force of its warnings, or impoverishes the fulness of its promises. The right of continual access to the tree of life was the promise of verse 14; this right or freedom is forfeited by those who deal falsely or faithlessly by the words of Christ here. In a minor degree, it is true that those who leave this book unstudied and unprayed over, lose much spiritual

from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book. (20) He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (21) The grace

Chap. xxii. 20. The final witness.

Chap. xxii. 21. The final blessing.

sustenance and comfort. How much more do they lose who trifle with it, ignore its spiritual teachings, and sin against the laws of that kingdom whose progress it so vividly portrays.

(20) **He which testifieth these things . . .**—Better, *He saith, who testifieth these things, Yea, I am coming quickly.* We have here the final witness; it is in the words of the faithful and true witness Himself. It is the answer to the repeated cry, "Come;" it is the warning to those who forget Him; it is introduced with the emphatic yea! "Yea, I am coming quickly." The answer breaks forth in prayer from the prophet's lips—*Amen.* (We must omit "even so") *Come, Lord Jesus.* The prophet is the mouthpiece of the Church; his desire is one with the desire of all who love Christ's appearing.

(21) **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .**—There is some variety of reading among the MSS. We ought probably to read, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all* (or else, following the Sinaitic MS., *be with the saints*). *Amen.* In any case, it is the grace or free pardon of the Lord Jesus which is the last word left in our ears. It reminds us that whatever be the dangers or difficulties, the afflictions or persecutions which have been pictured in the book, there is strength and love in the Lord; it reminds us that whether we are readers or interpreters of this book, or whether we are trying to carry out its teachings practically in daily life, our power and wisdom must come from Him. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Without Him it had not been written; without Him it cannot be understood; without Him it cannot be obeyed. This grace of Christ our Lord, for mind and heart and life, the writer prays may rest with those who read this Commentary, that they may be led into deeper knowledge of Him who is our life. The writer asks the reader to pray that this grace of Christ may rest in forgiveness and love upon him who has now finished his task of commenting on this book, whose hidden meanings must far transcend our knowledge and our expectations. May He (He alone can) open our eyes to see the shining towers of the Heavenly Jerusalem; may He unseal our ears to hear the heavenly music to which it is being built; may He bind us by His love to that sweet service and citizenship which is perfect freedom, and bring us to that spiritual city which is full of divine enchantments—

"For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; though some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real;

of our Lord Jesus Christ | | *be* with you all. Amen.

Yet take thou heed of Him, for, so thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
A thrall to His enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep; but so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without among the cattle of the field.
For, an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all
And therefore built for ever."

EXCURSUS ON NOTES TO REVELATION

EXCURSUS A: THE ANGELS OF THE CHURCHES.

The most usual interpretation regards the angels of the churches as the chief ministers or presiding elders of the congregations. This interpretation is so very widely adopted that it has been mentioned in the Notes; but the reader will have perceived that it is not a view which can be considered altogether satisfactory. In the first place, whatever date we accept for the Apocalypse, it is at least strange to find the titles, "elders" or "bishops," which were in common use, exchanged for the doubtful one of "angel." A common explanation is that the term is derived from the synagogue staff, where the messenger or "angel of the synagogue" was a recognised office; but the transference of such a title to any office in the Christian Church is at least doubtful, and as the officer so styled was only a subordinate in the synagogue, a "clerk" or "precentor" to conduct the devotions of the worshippers, it becomes very improbable that such a term or title would have been employed to describe the presiding elder of a Christian Church. Turning to the Old Testament, it is true that the word "angel" is used in a higher sense (Hagg. i. 13; Mal. ii. 7), being employed to describe the messengers of God; but the usage here is different. "It is conceivable, indeed, that a bishop or chief pastor should be called an angel, or messenger of God, or of Christ, but he would hardly be styled an angel of the church over which he presides." (Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 197, note.) Thus the interpretation under consideration appears scarcely satisfactory.

Others have thought the word "angel" is not to be applied to the individual presiding elder, but to the whole ministry of the Church, treated as one. This view, though in some senses approaching nearer to the truth, can hardly be sustained without considerable modification. Others, again, fall back upon Jewish authorities, and see in the angels the guardian angels of the churches. "In Daniel every nation has its ruling angel; and, according to the Rabbins, an angel is placed over every people." The angel, then, would be a literal, real angel, who has the guardianship of the church in question. In popular thought, then, the angel would be one of the good angelic beings whose special duty it was to bear up the church during its trials, by such providential ministries as were needed and ordered. There are some difficulties in accepting this interpretation. In particular the language of rebuke which is addressed directly to the angel himself—the threatening to remove his

candlestick, for example—sounds meaningless.

But here it is that we may inquire whether the angel of a particular community, nation, or people is to be understood always of a good and powerful being sent forth by the Almighty to love and watch over it. It is believed that this view does not satisfy the case. It is certain that Daniel represents the guardian angels of nations as opposed to each other, and not co-operating always for the same great and good end. "The prince (*guardian angel*) of the kingdom of Persia withstood me," is the language addressed to Daniel by him whose face was like lightning (Dan. x. 13). (Compare also verses 20, 21, and Dr. Currey's Notes in the *Speaker's Commentary* on these passages.) Such passages seem to suggest that the "angels" are the powers in the spiritual sphere corresponding to the peoples or communities in the earthly; and these may be on the side of evil or of good. Next, it may be noticed that the action of these angels in the spiritual sphere seems to be the reflection of the action of the community or people in the earthly. If the church at Ephesus has left its first love, the angel is spoken of as sharing the same fault. The influences seen on the spiritual side correspond with those at work in the actual earthly community. The angel of the church or of the individual thus becomes their manifestation in the heavenly sphere. For all our life is thus double; our actions have an earthly meaning, and also a heavenly; what they touch of worldly interests gives them their earthly meaning, what they touch of spiritual welfare is their heavenly meaning. Like the planets, we lie half in shadow and half in light: from the earthly side the world-meaning of our actions lies in the light, and their spiritual value or force is only dimly seen, as it lies in at least partial shadow; but seen from the heavenly side the position is reversed, the worldly significance of human actions is cast into comparative shade, the actual spiritual influences of them are brought into clear light; and it is the spiritual significance of our actions which reveals what we are; in this is concentrated the true force which we are exerting. Seen from the heavenly side, the angel of our life mingles in the great spiritual war, and takes its part as a combatant there: while, on the earthly side we are seen carrying on our daily occupations. Measured on the earthly side the balance is not struck; there is inconsistency in us; we are partly good and partly bad, sometimes helping, sometimes hindering the work of God on earth, as we judge; but the actual resultant of these inconsistent powers is seen in the heavenly sphere, either helping or thwarting the cause of good. Thus are we double combatants—in the world, for our livelihood, for our ease, for our advancement; in the heavenly, for good or for evil. And it is on the spiritual side that we lie open to spiritual influences; here, where our true self is seen more clearly than anywhere else, are the appeals to our better nature, as we say, most powerful; here, He who holds the stars in His right hand, makes His voice to be heard when He addresses, not merely the church or the individual, but the angel of the church; here, He calls them to see that there is a war in heaven,

in which all are combatants, but in which He is the Captain of our salvation. Here too, on the heavenly side, are the wounds of the spiritual and better nature more plainly seen; the offence or blow given to the little one of Christ is not noticed on the earthly side, but the inner nature is wounded, and the wound is seen in its real dimensions in the presence of God, for the angel nature beholds God's face. It is this thought which gives force and solemnity to our Lord's warning (Matt. xviii. 10).

The angel of the church, then, would be the spiritual personification of the church: but it must not be concluded from this, as Züllig does, that these angels are in "the mind of the poet himself nothing more than imaginary existences," or reduce the angel to be "just the community or church itself." It is no more the church itself than the "star" is the same as the candlestick. "The star is the supra-sensual counterpart, the heavenly representative; the lamp, the earthly realisation, the outward embodiment" (Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 198). The angel is the church seen in its heavenly representative, and seen, therefore, in the light of those splendid possibilities which are hers if she holds fast by Him who holds fast the seven stars.

Space forbids any treatment of the wider questions on the ministry of angels, or the nature of angelic beings. That such are recognised in Scripture there can be no doubt, and nothing written above is designed to militate against such a belief; but it seems well to remember that where we are dealing with a symbolical book, it is more in harmony with its character to treat symbols as symbols. The forces of nature are God's messengers, and we may regard them as truly such, and feel that the expressions "the angel of the waters," "the angel of fire," "the angel of the abyss," and so forth, are designed to remind us that all things serve Him, and are the ministers of Him, to do His pleasure; we may even believe that the various forces of nature, so little really understood by us, are under the guardianship of special personal messengers of God; but there is nothing in the imagery of the book which necessarily demands such a belief. It is, moreover, surely not inappropriate in our own day to reassert with some pertinacity the lofty thoughts of ancient belief that winds and storms, ocean and fire, do in truth belong to Him round whom are the clouds and darkness, whose is the sea, and whose hands prepared the dry land.

On the literature of this subject see Godet's *Studies on the New Testament;* Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church;* Lightfoot's article on "The Christian Ministry" in the *Epist'e to the Philippians*, pp. 193—199; Hengstenberg's lengthy note on Rev. i. 20; Professor Milligan's article, "The Candlestick and the Star," in the *Expositor* of September, 1878; Gebhardt, *Der Lehrbegriff der Apokalypse*, article "Die Engel," p. 37, or p. 36 in the English translation (*The Doctrine of the Apocalypse*) published by Messrs. Clark in the Foreign Theological Library. Also "Excursus on Angelology" in the *Speaker's Commentary* on Daniel, p. 348; article "Angels" in Smith's *Dictionary*.

EXCURSUS B: THE WILD BEAST.

It is to be noticed that the interpretation of the whole Apocalypse is coloured by the interpretation given to the wild beast. The book, as we have seen (see *Introduction*), is one of hope, but it is also one of warning; not without a struggle would the foe be driven from the earth where he had usurped power for so long. The devil is cast down—in the higher, heavenly sphere he is regarded as a fallen and defeated enemy; but this conflict has its counterpart on the arena of the world. The Apocalypse gives us in symbol some features of this conflict. It shows *four* powers of evil; the dragon, the first and second wild beasts, and Babylon the harlot. It is with the beast that we are now concerned, but one or two remarks on this family of evil will not be out of place.

I. The Family of Evil.

(1) The four antagonists of good are related to one another. The resemblance between the dragon and the wild beast (comp. Rev. xii. 3; xiii. 1; xvii. 3, 7, 10) is too obvious to be passed over; it seems designed to show us that the same principle and spirit of evil is at work in both. Again, the way in which the first wild beast gives place to the second wild beast, or false prophet (comp. chaps. xiii. 11, 12; xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10), and yet retains its ascendancy (comp. chap. xiii. 14—17), makes plain the close connection between them; and lastly, the appearance of the harlot, riding on the scarlet-coloured beast (chap. xvii. 3), completes the chain of association between them. The same principles and spirit of evil make themselves manifest in different spheres.

(2) The four antagonists of good are arranged to meet the four corresponding manifestations of good. For every power of good there is an analogous power of evil. If on the side of good we have the three Persons of the blessed Trinity—the Throned One, the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit—besides the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the heavenly Jerusalem; we have on the side of evil—the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, as a sort of trinity of evil—besides the harlot, Babylon. The dragon being a kind of anti-God; the wild beast, an anti-Christ; the false prophet, an anti-Spirit; the Babylon an anti-Church. The minor features in the same way correspond: the true Christ died and rose again; the anti-Christ, the wild beast, was wounded unto death, but his deadly wound was healed. The crucified Christ was exalted to be Prince and Saviour, and the outpoured Spirit upon the Church glorified Him by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to the disciples, and by convincing the world of sin because Christ went to the Father; the second beast, or false prophet, works wonders, causes an image of the first wild beast to be made and worshipped. The followers of the Lamb are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise; the worshippers of the wild beast receive from the false prophet the mark of the beast. (See chap. xiii. throughout.) It is desirable to keep these lines of parody and correspondent antagonism in mind.

II. The Wild Beast — or Antichrist.—It is with the beast that we are concerned in this *Excursus;* but we cannot altogether dissociate the first beast from the second, though their work is diverse.

(1) The first wild beast is clearly to be connected with the vision of Dan. vii. 2—7; the identification of the beast described by Daniel with four great empires is unquestionable: it is hardly our purpose to inquire whether the four empires are Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, and Rome; or Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Greece: the former, which is the more ancient opinion, appears the more probable; but it is enough to remember that these four beasts represent four great world-powers. St. John saw rising out of the sea (comp. Dan. vii. 2), not seven diverse beasts, but one seven-headed beast. Now it is perfectly true that to the early Christians Pagan and Imperial Rome was the one great world-power whose shadow darkened the earth, and that a seven-headed monster might well depict this Pagan Rome, as a four-headed beast had represented to Daniel an earlier empire (Greece or Persia); and the wild beast of Rev. xiii. from one aspect undoubtedly represents this great tyrant power; but it seems to the present writer that the genius of the Apocalypse is concentration; that which to earlier prophets was seen in detail is to the Christian seer grouped. Daniel saw four beasts rising one after another; St. John saw one wild beast, uniting in himself all the early, present, and future manifestations of that world-empire which has ever been hostile to the spiritual kingdom. Two reasons may be noticed; one from the Book of Daniel, the other from Revelation. This concentration of different world-powers into one representative body was not foreign to the thought of the earlier prophet. Daniel relates the vision in which the diverse monarchies of the world were represented as one huge human figure cast out of gold, silver, brass, and iron (Dan. ii. 31—49); the diverse powers were thus seen as one, and the little stone, which represented the true spiritual kingdom, in smiting upon one, caused the whole image to fall. The world-kingdoms were thus seen in prophetic vision as one great age-long world-power, which must be smitten by Christ's kingdom. The Book of Revelation also gives us a hint that the seven-fold aspect of the wild beast must not be given too limited or too local an interpretation. The wild beast, with seven heads and ten crowns, is in these features reproducing the appearance of the red dragon, who is also represented as having seven heads and ten crowns. (Comp. Rev. xii. 3; xiii. 1.) Now the dragon is surely the type of the great arch-enemy the Devil—the anti-God; the seven heads and ten crowns denote that he is the prince of this world, who has more or less animated the successive great world-powers by hostility to righteousness; the empires of the world have been his in so far as they have been founded on force, or fraud, oppression, or unholiness. When, then, the seven-headed wild beast rises from the sea, must we not see in the seven heads the counterpart of those which the dragon bore? The dragon carries those seven heads as he is the great spiritual prince of this world, the one who

is practically worshipped in all mere world-made empires. The wild beast carries these seven heads because he is the great representative of all these world-powers themselves, and what may give almost certainty to this interpretation is the fact that the wild beast unites in himself the appearance of leopard, bear, and lion, which were the emblems employed by Daniel to represent earlier monarchies. Actually at the moment St. John saw the vision the wild beast was to him Rome, because through Rome the great world-empire was then working. The seven heads might also look like types of successive emperors; but the more important, because age-long reading of the vision sets before us the concentration in one great monstrous wild beast of all those powers. Powers which were diverse and even politically hostile were yet ethically *one* power opposed to the fundamental principles of righteousness and peace, of purity and true godliness. The first wild beast, then, becomes the symbol of confederated and age-long world-powers.

(2) The second wild beast is allied with the first. His origin is not of God, he is of the earth: he is more peaceable in his appearance than the first beast, but his speech bewrays him; the dragon-voice is his, and he revives the worship of the first wild beast. In him, therefore, are combined the powers of the dragon and the first wild beast. Yet he yields homage to existing order: unlike the first wild beast, which rises out of an ocean of disorder and tumult, he springs out of the earth. He assumes in part, also, a Christian appearance: he is as a lamb. These features would lead us to expect a power not wholly irreligious—indeed, in some features Christian, yet practically Pagan: observing order, yet arrogant; a second power resembling the first, yet possessing a more specious appearance to mankind. It is on this second wild beast that the seer bids us fasten our more marked attention. It is this second wild beast who deceives by false wonders and false worship, and introduces a great and grinding tyranny. It is this second wild beast to whom is attributed the mysterious number 666. It is well now to turn back to earlier writings. In Dan. vii. we read of a "little horn," and in the description there we find much that is parallel with the description here. (Comp. Dan. vii. 8 with Rev. xiii. 5; Dan. vii. 21 with Rev. xiii. 7.) This "little horn" of Daniel has been identified (comp. *Excursus on Interpretation of* 2 Thess. ii. 3—12) with the "Man of Sin" spoken of by St. Paul (2 Thess. ii. 3). Some think that the little horn of Dan. vii. is identical with the horn of chap. viii. Into this question we have not space to enter: it will be enough here to keep in mind that St. Paul looked for the manifestation of an Antichrist, a Man of Sin, whose type in all likelihood he found in the little horn of Dan. vii.; and that the picture of the Antichrist painted by St. Paul is that of a power not professedly irreligious, but yet claiming from mankind the homage due to God (2 Thess. ii. 4). This seems quite in harmony with the characteristics of the second wild beast, who, it is to be remembered, is described (Rev. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10) as the "false prophet." We may, then, take the second wild beast as

the picture of a power, cultured, quasi-religious, borrowing much from Christianity, yet built upon anti-Christian principles, and animated by an anti-Christian spirit.

(3) *The identification of the Wild Beast, False Prophet, or Antichrist.*—"Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come" (1 John ii. 18). This is St. John's acknowledgment of the wide-spread belief that a great falling away should precede the coming of Christ. Here he is at one with St. Paul, but it is consistent with the spirit of St. John's thought that he should remind his hearers that the spirit of Antichrist was abroad already, and that in a present antagonism to this spirit lay true Christian duty: accordingly, he indicates in more than one place what were some features of the anti-Christian spirit (1 John ii. 22; iv. 1—3). It is also significant that he uses the phrase "false prophet," reminding us of the Apocalypse, which identifies, as we have seen, the wild beast, or Antichrist, with the false prophet. St. John thus appears to regard the spirits and false prophets abroad in his day as at least anticipations of the great future Antichrist and false prophet. Actually there were Antichrists then in the world; but in the prophetic ideal all these were as *one* great Antichrist. In the Apocalyptic vision the scattered spirits grew into one great representative opponent—the wild beast, the false prophet. Is there, then, no personal Antichrist? It has been ably argued (see *Excursus on Prophecy of* 2 Thess. ii.) that the Man of Sin must be an individual. There are certain expressions which seem to point to a single person—notably the remarkable use of the masculine gender when the wild beast is referred to (see Rev. xiii. 5): but it seems more consonant with the symbolism of the Apocalypse to regard the wild beast as the figurative embodiment of the false, seductive, anti-Christian principle and spirit, which belongs to more ages than one, which reveals itself in diverse aspects, and yet always manifests the same hostility to the Divine Spirit. It must not, however, be supposed that this view denies a personal Antichrist. On the contrary, it is perfectly in harmony with this view to note that the wild-beast spirit has often culminated in an individual: the typical forecasts of Antichrist have often been individuals. Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod, Nero, might fairly be regarded as the incarnation of the ungodly spirit. Similarly, in later ages, it is not to be wondered at that holy, Christ-taught men, groaning for the sorrows of the world and the corruptions of Christianity, saw in many who occupied the Papal chair the very representatives of the false prophet, the Antichrist. Not more need it surprise us to find the same thought passing through men's mind when pretensions, which would be ridiculous if they were not blasphemous, have been advanced on behalf of the Roman Pontiff, till the Church becomes a parody rather than a witness of Divine truths. It follows that the view here maintained does not exclude the possibility of a future personal Antichrist, in whom the typical features shall yet find clearer and fuller manifestation than in any previous age. But though all this may be, and though godly men tell us that all these things must be, it appears to the writer infinitely more important to notice the principles which

may constitute the Antichrist in every age: the denial of the Father and the Son (1 John ii. 22), the denial of the Mediator and Incarnate God (1 John iv. 2, 3), the arrogant claim of divine honours, the specious resemblance to Him who is the Lamb of God, the disregard of sacred ties (2 Thess. ii. 10; 1 Tim. iv. 3), the possession of wonderful power and culture (Rev. xiii. 11—14). The spirit which is depicted is one which might well develop out of the elements around us. It would not be impossible to imagine the rankest materialism allying itself with a gorgeous ritual—to see the high priests of science acquiescing in the most elaborate of ecclesiasticisms, and the agnostic in creed becoming a ceremonialist in worship, till the satire should be only too sadly true, "I found plenty of worshippers, but no God." We should then have every element in human nature allowed its nutriment — for the mind, science; for the emotions, worship; for the conduct, direction. The tripartite nature of man would be thus provided for, but the unity of his manhood would be at an end —for the worship would be unintelligent, the moral tone lifeless, because deprived of the vital sense of personal responsibility, and the intellect uninspired, because godless. Such an age would be the reign of that climax of anti-Christian spirit which is the perfection of man's powers without God, foreshadowed by the mysterious number 666, which is seeming exaltation of all human powers, but which is in truth their degradation and their discord.

III. **The Number of the Beast.**—It would serve but little purpose to recapitulate the various solutions of the number of the beast. An account of them will be found in Elliott (vol. iii.). The chief solutions are those mentioned in the Notes. The most ancient, and perhaps most general, solution sees in the number the equivalent of *Lateinos*. Others see in it the numerical equivalent of one of the Roman emperors: Nero, advocated by Renan; Otho, advocated by an Italian writer, who accounts for the reading, "616" instead of "666," by the alteration made by a copyist to suit the name of another emperor, Caligula: Γαιος καισαρ= 616. None of these numerical solutions appears to the writer adequate to the whole depth of the seer's meaning, though they may be included in the significance of the symbol.

INDEX

Abaddon, or Apollyon, 123.
Advent, Expectancy of, 25; idea of, 26.
Alogi, The, 2.
Alterations in the order of the twelve tribes, 97.
Angelic army attendant on the King of kings, 224.
Angels of the churches, 37, 43, 45, 49, 52, 60, 262.
Antipas, 46.
Aphrodite, Worship of, 52.
Apocalypse, Authorship of, 2, 3; its predictions applicable to all eras, 24; early date of, 38; benediction on its readers, 24, 255.
Apocalypse, John the writer, Christ the author, 1.
Armageddon, Battle of, 197.
Arnold, Matthew, 3.
Asia Minor, Extent of, 25.
Augustine, St., 25.

B.

Babylon, Fall of, 181, 199, 201, 202, 208; all nations drunken with the wine of her iniquities, 210; kings and merchants weep for her fall, 212, 215; her merchandise, 212—214; her irremediable overthrow, 217; exultation over her fall, 216—219.
Battle, The last great, 234, 235.
Beast from the bottomless pit, The, 147.
Beast rising from the earth, 173; his two horns, *ib.*; assumes the power of the first beast, *ib.*; deceiveth men by false miracles, 174; his image worshipped, 175; causeth all to receive a mark, *ib.*; the number of his name, 176, 177, 269; his worship denounced, 181; vial poured out on his seat, 194; destined to perdition, 204, 206; his final overthrow, 226, 227.
Beast rising from the sea, 167; its seven heads and ten horns, 168; the dragon gives him power, 169; one of his heads wounded, *ib.*; his blasphemies, 170; he wars with the saints, 171.
Beasts, Wrong rendering of the word, 68.
Binding of Satan, 229.
Black horse, and its rider, 84.
Bottomless pit, Angel of the, 123; opening of the, 117; beast rising from the, 147; Satan cast therein for a thousand years, 230.
Bread, High price of, after the opening of the second seal, 85.

C.

Call to the holy to rejoice over fallen Babylon, 216—219.
Church, The, symbolised as a woman travailing in birth, 156; a man-child brought forth, 158; the child caught up to God, 159; the woman persecuted by the red dragon,

ib.; her flight into the wilderness 1,260 days, *ib.*; persecuted by the dragon or serpent, 165.
Chorus of the Church of God, 152; of the universe, 78; of the heavenly multitude rejoicing over fallen Babylon, 218.
Christians, Dignity of, 77.
Christology of the Apocalypse, 4.
Christ's coming yet future, 15—17.
Clement of Alexandria, 2, 5, 42.
Commentators on the Apocalypse, 21.
Conquering, Frequent allusions to, 42.
Convulsions of Nature after the sixth seal, 89.
Cybele, Worship of, 52.
Cyprian, 2.

D.

Date and time of writing of the Apocalypse, 8—11.
Davidson, Professor, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13.
Days, The 1,260, 144.
Dead, Resurrection of the, 236, 237.
Death, Various forms of, 86.
Devil, Satan, or the dragon overcome by Michael, 161; bound for a thousand years, 230; after loosing, deceives the nations, 233, 234; cast into the fiery lake, 235.
Dionysius of Alexandria, 2.
Dionysos, Worship of, 43, 52; mysteries of, 45.
Domitian date of the Apocalypse, 8, 43.
Dragon, The great red, 157; persecutes the Church of God, 158; overcome by Michael, 161; song of triumph, 162, 163.
Dyeing, Art of, 52, 59.

E.

Elders, the four-and-twenty, 66, 75, 79, 151, 219.
Ephesus, Church of, 38—42; its patience, 40; its decline in faith, *ib.*; threatened punishment, 41; reward for faithful service, 42.
Ephesus, The city, 38; Paul's labours therein, *ib.*
Eternity of Christ, 26.
Euphrates, Loosing of four angels from the, 126, 127; sixth vial poured out on the, 195.
Eusebius, 2, 3, 8.
Exile of St. John at Patmos, Date of, 8.

F.

False prophet, The, 196; cast into the fiery lake, 226.
False teachers among the Ephesians, 39.
Family of evil, 265.
Famine, and its fearful effects, 84.
Fifth seal, Opening of the, 86.
Fifth trumpet, The, 117.
Final crisis of Nature, The, 89, 90.
Final regeneration, The, 238—240.
First seal, Opening of the, 82.
First trumpet, The, 112.
Four, The number, 69.
Fourth seal, Opening of the, 85.
Fourth trumpet, The, 115.
Futurist school of interpretation, 11, 12; its advocates, 12.

G.

Gebhardt, 4.
General scope of the Apocalypse, 17—21.
German critics on the Apocalypse, 2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 21.
Gnostics, The, 51.
God Almighty, Battle of the great day of, 197.
God's kingdom universal, 151.
God's marvellous works, 188.
Gospel, its success through suffering, 87.
Grotius, 23.

H.

Harlot, Judgment on the great, 208.
Harvest, The spiritual, 183.
Heathenism, Temptations of the Pergamenes to, 47.
Heavenly Jerusalem, 240—254.
Heavenly throne, Visions of the, 64—79.
Hegesippus, 3.
Hell the attendant of Death on the pale horse, 86.
Historical school of interpretation, 12; its advocates, *ib.*
Horses, and their riders, 129; their number, *ib.*

I.

Ignatius, 43.
Image of the beast, 174, 175, 182, 186, 191, 227, 231.
Interposed visions, The, 132—150
Irenæus, 2, 3, 42.

J.

Jerome, 8.
Jerusalem, The heavenly, 243—246; its measurement, 246; its building or materials, 247—251.
Jewish hostility to the Christians, 44.
Jewish influence on Christianity, 58.
Judgment of the world, 235—238; upon the fearful and unbelieving, 243.
Justin Martyr, 2, 5.

K.

Keys of heaven and hell, 36.
Keys, Power of the, 57.

L.

Lactantius, 2.
Lamb on Mount Zion, The, 178; song of His servants, 179; His followers, 180; their implicit obedience, 180.
Lamb, The, King of kings and Lord of lords, 207.
Lament of the kings and merchants over Babylon's fall, 212.
Laodicea, the city, 59.
Laodiceans, Church of the, 60—64; its lukewarmness, 60; its spiritual poverty, 61, 62.
Literature of the Apocalypse, 21, 264.
Living beings, The four, 68—70, 190.
Loosing of Satan, and his final overthrow, 233—235.
Lukewarmness of the Laodiceans, 61.
Luxuries, Hunger of more value than, 85.
Lydia, the purple-seller, 49.

M.

Marriage supper of the Lamb, The, 220, 221.
Martyrs, Triumph and sovereignty of the, 230, 231.
Measuring of the Temple, 140.
Michael overcomes the dragon, 161; song of triumph, 162.
Millennium, The, 227—232.
Misery of the Church after the fourth seal, 86.
Mohammedan invasions, 122, 123.
Moses and the Lamb, Song of, 187.
MSS., Various readings of, 28, 32, 36, 40, 41, 46, 50, 54, 56, 79, 82, 116, 163, 176, 237, 240, 251, 252, 257, 260.
Multitude, The innumerable, 98, 99.

N.

New heavens and new earth, The, 238—243.
Nicolaitanes, The, 39, 41, 42, 47, 50.

Number of the beast, The, 176, 177, 269.
Number of the sealed, 96.

O.

Origen, 8.
Overcome, Promises to those who, 42, 45, 47, 51, 54, 58, 63, 242.
Overthrow of the kingdom of evil, Chorus for the, 151.

P.

Pale horse and its rider, 85.
Papias, 3.
Paradise, The restored, 252—254.
Patmos, 29.
Pergamos, Church of, 43—48; its works and faith commended, 46.
Pergamos, the city, 45, 49.
Persecution following the fifth seal, 87.
Philadelphia, Church of, 56—59.
Philadelphia, the city, 55, 59.
Polycarp, 43, 44.
Præterist school of interpretation, 11, 12; its advocates 12.

R.

Redeemed, Song of the, 76, 100.
Redemption and its privileges, 77.
Red horse and its rider, 83.
Resurrection, The first, 231; blessedness of those who have part in it, 232.
Resurrection, The general, 232.
Rome, Judgment on, 200; symbolised by the beast, 204.

S.

Saadias Gaon, on Christ's appearance, 33.
Saints, Drunken with the blood of the, 202.
Saracens, Invasion of the, 122.
Sardis, Church of, 53—55; its piety, 53; watchfulness recommended, 54; warnings, *ib.*
Sardis, the city, 49, 52, 55; its commercial products, *ib.*
Satan bound for a thousand years, 230 (*see* Devil).
Scholten, Dr., 3, 4.
Schools and principles of interpretation, 11—16.
Seal, The first, 82; the second, 83; the third, 84; the fourth, 85; the fifth, 86; the sixth, 89; the seventh, 104.
Sealed roll, The, 71; no man able to open it, 72; the Lamb opens it, 80.
Sealing of the twelve tribes, 96.
Seals, Visions of the seven, 80—82; Opening of the, 82—104.
Second Advent, Christ's, 28.
Second seal, Opening of the, 83.
Second trumpet sounded, The, 113
Seven churches, The, 25, 31, 37—63.
Seven, Frequency of the, 27.
Seven golden candlesticks, 31, 37.
Seven-headed wild beast, The, 10.
Seven last plagues, Seven angels with the, 186, 189; their clothing, 189.
Seven stars, 34, 37, 53.
Seven trumpets, Sounding of the, 112—151; seven angels with the, 107.
Seventh seal, Opening of the, 104.
Seventh trumpet, The last woe trumpet, 151.
Sixth seal, Opening of the, 89.
Sixth trumpet, The, 124.
Shipmasters, Lament of the, over Babylon, 215, 216.
Smyrna, Church of, 43—45; its work, tribulation, and poverty, 43, 44.
Smyrna, the city, 42; Polycarp, 43.
Sufferings of the Church after the fifth seal, 87.
Sun-god, Worship of the, 49.

T.

Tertullian, 2, 8, 42.
Theophylact, 8.
Thief, Christ's sudden coming like a, 197.
Third trumpet, The, 114.
Third seal, The, 84.
Thyatira, the city, 49, 55.
Thyatira, Church of, 50—52; its works, faith, and charity, 50; repentance essential, 51.
Trumpets, Sounding of the seven, 112—151.

U.

Unclean spirits, The three, 196.

V.

Vial, The first, 191; the second, *ib.*; the third, 192; the fourth, 193; the fifth, 194; the sixth, 195; the seventh, 198.
Vials, The seven golden, 190; pouring out of, 191—198.
Vintage, The spiritual, 184, 185.

W.

Walking in white, 54.
War in heaven, The, 160; Michael's victory, 161; song of triumph, 162, 163.
War, sometimes an inevitable evil, 83.
Wars to precede and follow Christ's coming as the Prince of Peace, 83, 84.
Watchfulness inculcated, 53.
White horse and its rider, 82.
Wild beast or Antichrist, The, 266—269 (*see* Beast).
Wings, Six, 69.
Witness against evil, The, 132—150.
Witnesses, The two, 143—147; their resurrection and ascension, 149.
Woe, The first, 117—124; the second, 124—150; the third, 151.
Woe-trumpets, The three, 116.
Woman on the scarlet-coloured beast, 201; judgment on her, 200.
Words of confirmation or warning, 254—261.
Worship of angels condemned, 221.
Worship of God by the four living creatures, 70.
Worship of the beast, Fearful punishment of, 182.
Worthiness of Christ to receive adoration, 76.

Z.

Zosimos, the supposed angel of Sardis, 53.

INDEX TO WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

Abyss, Key of the, 117; opening of the pit of the, *ib.*; smoke issuing therefrom, 118.
Additions to the word of God forbidden, 259.
Alleluia, 219, 220.
Almighty, The, 29.
Alpha and Omega, 31, 242, 257.
Altar, Souls slain under the, 87.
Amen, a personal name, 60.
Angel of the abyss, 123.
Angel of the waters, 193.
Angel with the key of the bottomless pit, 229.
Angel with the little book, The, 133, 138.
Angel with the seals of the living God, 94.
Angels of the churches, 37, 43, 45, 49, 52, 60, 262; presiding pastors, 60; Christ's power over, 53.
Asia, Seven churches of, 25.

B.

Babylon the great, Fall of, 209; her iniquities, 210; her retribution, 211; her hands defiled by blood, 218.
Balaam, Doctrine of, 47.
Balances, The bearer of the, 84.
Beast and false prophet cast into the fiery lake, 226.
Beginning and the ending, The, 29.
Beginning of the creation of God, 61.
Blasphemy, Full of names of, 201.
Blood of the Lamb, Washed in the, 102; overcoming by the, 162.
Blood of the martyrs avenged, 88.
Blood-washed multitude, The, 102.
Blotting out the name, 55.
Bride, the Lamb's wife, 220, 244.

C.

Candlesticks, Seven golden, 31, 32.
Chief corner-stone, Jesus Christ the, 246.
Chorus of myriad angels, 77.
Christ's servants in the new Jerusalem, 253.
Christ's throne, Sharing of, 63.
Cometh with clouds, 28.
Confess His name, 55.
Creation, The new, 241, 242.
Crown of life, 45.
Crown of triumph, 83.
Crowns cast before the throne, 70.
Crystal sea, The, 68, 186.

D.

Darkness, Beast's kingdom full of, 194.
Darkness, No more, 254.
Death and Hell cast into the fiery lake, 237.
Death and Hell on the pale horse, 85, 86.
Death, mourning, crying, pain, ended, 241.
Deceive the nations, Satan tries to, 233.
Depths of Satan, 51.

Devil, the accuser, 44.
Dogs, sorcerers, and idolaters, 258.
Door, Christ knocking at the, 63.
Door opened in heaven, 65.
Doxology, The sevenfold, 78, 100; the threefold, 70; the twofold, 28.
Dragon bound for a thousand years, 229.

F.

Eagle, better reading for "angel," 116.
Ear, He that hath an, 42.
Earthquake, The great, 150, 198.
Eye-salve, 63.
Eyes of the Lamb a flame of fire, 33, 49, 223.

F.

Faithful and True, Christ as the, 223.
Faithful and true witness, 60.
Faithful witness and first-begotten, 27.
Fall of Babylon, 181.
Fine brass, 33, 49.
First and the last, Christ the, 35, 43.
For ever and ever = unto ages of ages, 182.
Four angels holding the four winds, 93.

G.

Gates of the new Jerusalem open continually, 251.
Glory of the new Jerusalem, 245, 250.
God feared and worshipped by all nations, 188, 189.
God's commandments, Blessedness of doing them, 257.
Gog and Magog, 233, 234.
Gold used to indicate faith, 62.
Golden censer and incense, 109, 110.
Golden cup, Woman with the, 202.
Golden harps and golden vials, 75.
Golden reed, A, 246.
Grace and peace, The salutation, 25.
Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, 260.
Great day of wrath, Who can stand the, 92.
Gospel angel, The, 180.

H.

Heaven opened, Vision of, 222.
He that is, was, and is to come, 26.
Hidden manna, The, 48.
Holy and true, Christ the, 56.
Horns, Symbolic use of, 74.

J.

Jacinth and brimstone, Breastplates of fire, 129.
Jasper and sardine stone, Christ as a, 66.
Jasper-stone, 248.
Jews, 44.
Jezebel, her evil influence at Thyatira, 50, 51.
John, the Apostle, 23.
John, your brother, 29.

K.

Keep, The word, 24.
Key of David, 56.
Keys of hell and death, 37.
King of kings and Lord of lords, Christ the, 225.
Kings and priests unto God, 76, 77.
Kings of the earth, Terror of the, 91.
Kings of the east, Way of the, 196.

L.

Lamb, Christ the, 246.
Lamb on Mount Zion, The, 178.
Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, The, 74.

Lamb, Worship of the, 79.
Lightnings and thunderings, 67.
Lion of the tribe of Judah, The, 73.
Little Book, The, 133, 134; John eats it, 136.
Living beings, The four, 68—70, 190.
Living One, The, 36.
Locusts, Invasion of, 118; their malignant effect, 118, 119; their tormenting power, 120; shapes, crowns, hair, tails, *ib.*, 121.
Lord's day, The, 30.
Loved us, washed us, 28.

M.

Man-child, Birth of the, 158; caught up to God, 159.
Mark of the beast, 226.
Merchandise of Babylon, 212—214.
Moon as blood, The, 90.
Morning Star, Christ the, 259.
Morning star, The, 52.
Mother of harlots, The, 202.
Mountain burning with fire, The, 113.
Mystery, Babylon the great, 202.

N.

Name of God, Write on him the, 59.
Neither cold nor hot, 61.
"New," Greek words translated, 238.
New heavens and new earth, The, 238.
New Jerusalem, John's view of the, 240, 243; its light the glory of God, 245, 250; its walls, 245; its twelve foundations, 246; its measurement, 247; stones in the foundation of its walls, 248, 249; its twelve gates, 249; no temple therein, 250; its gates always open, 251; no defilement therein, *ib.*; no curse, 253; no night, 254.
New name, The, 48.
New song, The, 76.
No more sea, 239.

O.

Open door, The, 57.

P.

Pillar in the temple, 58.
Plague of hail, The, 199.
Plagues of Babylon, 211.
Plagues on those who repented not of their sins, 131.
Power over the nations, 51.
Prince of the kings of the earth, 27.
Prophecy of the two witnesses, 144—147.

Q.

Quickly, I come, 58, 255, 257, 260.

R.

Rainbow round the throne, 66.
Rebuking and chastening, 63.
Record, testimony, witness, 24.
Red dragon with seven heads and seven horns, 157; his overthrow, 161.
Redeemed, Blessedness of the, 102—104.
Reed to measure the temple, 141.
Remnant slain, 226.
Repentance, Need of, 54, 63.
Rest for a season, 88.
Revelation of Jesus Christ, Christ the author, John the writer, 23.
River of life, The, 252.
Root of David, The, 73.
Rule the nations with a rod of iron, 51.

S.

Saints, Patience of the, 183.
Sea of glass, The, 68, 186.
Second death, The, 45.
Serpent, The old, cast out, 161; water ejected from his mouth, 165; the earth swallows up the flood, 166.
Seven angels with seven trumpets, 107.
Seven angels with the seven vials, 200.
Seven eyes, 74.
Seven heads and ten horns, Beast with, 167, 203.
Seven horns, 74.
Seven kings, 204.
Seven lamps of fire, 67.
Seven last plagues, The, 186, 189.
Seven spirits, The, 26, 53, 67.
Shed the blood of saints and prophets, 193.
Shortly, The word, 23.
Son of God, 49.
Son of man, 32, 183; his dress, 32; his head, eyes, 33, 49; feet, voice, 33; right hand, 34, 38; countenance, 35; St. John's terror and rapture at the sight, 35.
Song of God's marvellous works, 188.
Song of Moses and the Lamb, 187.
Souls of men, Traffic in the, 213.
Spirit and the bride, The, 259.
Spirit, John in the, 30, 65.
Star fallen from heaven, 117.
Stars, Falling of the, 90.
Stones in the foundations of the new Jerusalem, 248, 249.
Sun black as sackcloth, The, 90.
Sun, moon, and stars smitten, 115.
Sun, No need of, in the new Jerusalem, 250.
Synagogue of Satan, 44, 57.

T.

Tabernacle of the testimony, 189.
Temple, Greek words translated, 141.
Temple of God, Measuring of the, 141—143.
Temple of God opened in heaven, 153.
Ten horns of the beast, 206, 207.
Testimony of Jesus the spirit of prophecy, 222.
Third part of men slain, 130.
Three days and a half, The, 149.
Three unclean spirits like frogs, 196.
Time shall be no longer, 137.
Tree of life, 42, 252; its twelve fruits, 252, 253.
Twelve tribes doubled, The, 67.
Two-edged sword, 34, 46, 224.

U.

Unjust, holy, The, to remain so, 256.
Untimely figs, Casting of the, 90.

V.

Voice of a trumpet, 65.
Voice of many waters, Christ's voice as the, 33, 65.
Voice, sound, 33.
Voices from heaven, 179, 183, 191, 210, 240, 241.
Voices from heaven denouncing Babylon, 210.
Voices, thunders, and lightnings, 198.

W.

Wailing, 29.
White horse, and his rider, 82.
White raiment, 63.
White robes of the suffering saints, 88.
White stone, 48.

Winepress of God's wrath, 185, 225.
Witnesses for Jesus, Triumph of the, 230, 231.
Woman clothed with the sun, 156; brings forth a man-child, 158; persecuted by the dragon, 164.
Woman drunken with the blood of the saints, 202.
Woman on the scarlet-coloured beast, 201.
Word of God, Christ the, 224.
Word of patience, The, 58.
Works, labour, and patience, Christ's knowledge of, 39.
Wormwood, The burning star, 115.
Worship of angels forbidden, 255, 256.

THE END

Printed by CASSELL & COMPANY, Limited, La Belle Sauvage, London, E.C.
10.1209

S0-DZJ-236